
THE ASHBURNHAM MASTER PLAN

Prepared for
The Town of Ashburnham

April 1986

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ashburnham Master Plan addressed the need for the town to review the land use and social-economic changes happening in Ashburnham and to identify priorities for future action. The process of preparing this Master Plan involved both local officials and citizens, and thus sought out a wide range of positions on the planning issues facing the town. The Master Plan consists of this report, the Blueprint for Growth and a series of maps. These tools give the town both a picture of Ashburnham as it is today, and a vision of Ashburnham in the future.

The objectives of this study were:

1. To review the trends in land use, demographics and economics in the town;
2. To identify needs and opportunities that could be addressed by action at the town level;
3. To develop objectives to guide future decisionmaking;
4. To develop general recommendations to guide future action; and
5. To present specific action steps to help the town meet its objectives.

This study departed from the usual master plan in the following ways:

Recommendations were specific. The objectives and recommendations that arose from this study covered many facets of the town's land use problems. In all cases, responsibility was fixed to the office or board that was best suited to work on each particular problem. This approach resulted in a Master Plan that has become a working tool to guide planning and land use management in the months and years to come. The Blueprint for Growth consists of board by board recommendations that relate to the work that should be done in the next 3 months and on through the next two years.

Land use management was reviewed. Along with studying the trends and problems occurring on Ashburnham's landscape, this Master Plan also reviewed the problems that each board faces regarding administering land use regulations in the town. This represented the study's orientation of not only identifying what needs to be done, but also what will stand in the way of it getting done.

I. INTRODUCTION

A Master Plan is a chance for a community to step back and take a careful look at the direction it is being pushed by the forces around it and at the direction in which it would ideally like to head. A Master Plan is a tool to help a community use its land resources efficiently, with an eye toward the future economic and social needs of the town's citizens. A municipality's administration of land use regulations can have a great impact on the character of that community's long term development, for land is a finite resource. The changes that occur on the land have long-term impacts and it is, therefore, in the best interests of local government to ensure that those changes will be as beneficial to the community as possible.

Although population growth and land use changes can be guided by government, these changes cannot be prevented. The "right to travel", or the freedom to move from one place to another, is guaranteed by the Constitution. Therefore, if people continue to see Ashburnham as a desirable place to relocate, they are guaranteed that right, and local government cannot stand in the way of that growth. To do so would be exclusionary. Local government does, however, have the responsibility and the right to protect the health, safety and welfare of its current and future citizens. Planning is an expression of that responsibility, and the issues at the core of a master plan relate to the powers given to government by the people to protect property rights, the environment, and ensure balanced growth.

This Master Plan consists of three parts: this final report (The Ashburnham Master Plan), the working manual (Blueprint for Growth), and a set of maps that describe the town's current resources and future plans. This plan and its parts are tools and should be used accordingly. The objectives should be reviewed often, and ongoing work should be judged by its contribution to reaching the town's planning objectives. The recommendations give both general and specific directions for reaching the Master Plan's objectives. As time passes, some recommendations may become less relevant, while others may hold their importance for many years. If there is one recommendation that summarizes the most important ideas of this plan it is that:

The Town of Ashburnham shall continue to plan and manage its future growth.

If this town continues to plan and continues to set new objectives and continues to develop new approaches to addressing its planning needs, then the major purpose of this Master Plan will have been accomplished.

II. CURRENT ISSUES AND TRENDS

This chapter reviews available information concerning Ashburnham's human, natural and governmental resources and analyzes that information to identify the important growth related problems and opportunities for the Town of Ashburnham. Additionally, it summarizes the results of interviews, meetings and a survey done to gather public input and answer questions on the master planning process.

Several types of data and information are presented in this section. Secondary data were drawn from a variety of sources including both local and regional studies, and state and federally produced information on demographics, economics and housing. The second source of information was interviews done with Ashburnham's public officials and business people. The third set of information consists of data concerning the land's physical base and land-related activities. Finally, the results of a 295 household survey are presented. A complete list of the data sources is given in the Appendix.

Combined as a whole, these data present information about Ashburnham that serves as a backdrop to the process of determining how the Town should plan for its future. This portion of the report answers questions such as: How does Ashburnham's rate of growth compare to elsewhere? What type of people live in Ashburnham? What type of people are moving to Ashburnham? Are there enough jobs? What is the condition of the housing? Are there any environmental problems? What resources must be protected? And, how do the people of Ashburnham feel about the land use changes within their town?

Ashburnham is in the midst of dramatic change. Not since the middle years of this century, when the town's manufacturing base declined, has it faced changes that will so seriously alter its character. Since 1960, the town's population has grown by 57% (2758 to 4322). The degree of this growth is evident when compared to the fact that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole grew only 12% over that same period.

From 1984 to 1985, the number of building permits issued rose by 33%, from 60 in 1984 to over 80 in 1985. In 1980, the average cost for a house in Ashburnham was \$37,000. As of 1985, houses in Ashburnham cost between \$60,000 and \$90,000.

In 1970, 50% of all the housing units in Ashburnham were seasonal. By 1980 that figure had dropped to 26% due to new home construction and conversions of seasonal homes to year-round residences. New construction over the last ten years has occurred throughout the town. Of the 445 acres that were developed in the town between 1972 and 1985, 246 or 55% were located near the lakes.

From a time when the majority of people worked in the town's factories, work patterns have shifted to a point where, as of 1980, over 2100 people commuted out of Ashburnham each morning. For the first time in this small town's history, traffic jams have become a problem in the center of town.

The forests and lakes of Ashburnham give the town a special environment that should be conserved and protected. A 1980 study by the state

Department of Environmental Quality Engineering cited increasing levels of pollution in Sunset Lake, Ward Pond and Stodge Meadow Pond due to failing septic systems. The smaller lots in Ashburnham Center and South Ashburnham, combined with poor soil conditions, have resulted in septic system overflows and pollution in Phillips Brook. Without a public sewer system, further development in these areas will create serious pollution problems.

Ashburnham's growth rate raises other pressing issues. Is there enough recreation land? Is there enough land for industrial growth? How can the downtown's historic buildings be protected? How can the town ensure that it will continue to be a rural place? Is there enough housing for elders? If a person or family can't afford to buy a house, do they have the option to rent?

The long range implications of making poor land use decisions can be costly to a municipality. Not acquiring land for recreation or parking, inadequately protecting the town's water supply or not considering housing are likely to lead to declines in the town's economy and quality of life in the future. Thinking and acting now to address land use problems is the key to successful master planning.

A. Demographics and Economics - The People of Ashburnham

Population Characteristics

From 1960 to 1980, Ashburnham experienced a 60% increase in its population, compared to a less than 13% increase for Worcester County and the State of Massachusetts as a whole (See Table 1). Based on building trends in 1984 and 1985, the population has grown by at least 100 persons per year. (See Table 2) As of 1984, it was estimated by the Center for Massachusetts Data that the town had a population of over 4400 people. The 1985 town Census placed the population level at 4322. Map 4 indicates the location of development in town from 1971 to 1985.

In 1980, the town's 4075 residents were living in a total of 1320 households. Of those households, 81% were classified by the U.S. Census Bureau as families. The state family/household ratio was 71%. Twenty-one percent of Ashburnham families had children 6 years of age or less; compared with 20% for the state. Of all the children 18 years or younger, 88% lived in families with two parents. The Worcester County average was 80% and the state average was 78%. Of the persons 60 years of age and older, only 17% were living alone in Ashburnham compared to approximately 25% for the county and state average. Of the women in the town who were classified as being eligible to work and who had young children (6 years or less), only 28% were working compared with a rate of 42% working in the county and state.

As shown in Table 3, Ashburnham's population is quite similar to the county and state averages in respect to age. The primary differences are that the town has a greater percentage of people under 18 years of age, slightly fewer people in the 18 to 65 category and fewer people over 65. These figures reinforce the profile of Ashburnham as a community that is home to many young families.

Table 1 - Population Increases in Ashburnham, Worcester County and Massachusetts - 1960-1980.

	1960 Population	1980 Population	% Change
Ashburnham	2758	4075	47.7
Worcester County	583,228	646,352	10.8
Massachusetts	5,148,578	5,737,093	11.4

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing

Table 2 - Estimated Ashburnham Population Increases from 1980 to 1985

	#Building Permits Issued*	Standard Houshold Size**	Increase to Pop. (# of people)	Annual Growth Rate(%)
1980	20	3.345	67	2.4
1981	22	3.345	73	2.6
1982	31	3.345	104	3.6
1983	42	3.345	140	4.7
1984	61	3.345	204	6.5
1985	80	3.345	267	8.0

* Building Permits for construction of single and two family home only

** Northeast standard for three bedroom single family home

Sources: Town Building Permit Records. Burchell, Robert and Listokin, David. 1985. The Fiscal Impact Handbook.

Table 3 - 1980 Ashburnham, Worcester County and State Age Distributions.

Place	%<5	%5-18	%18-65	%65+	Median Age
Ash.	7.0	23.8	57.5	10.7	30.4
W.C.	6.4	20.9	59.8	12.9	31.0
State	5.9	20.1	61.3	12.7	31.2

Source: 1980 U.S. Census of Population

Together, these statistics point toward a slightly more traditional family community than is the average in Worcester County and the State. Whereas this would not surprise anyone familiar with the number of single family homes being sold to couples in Ashburnham or familiar with the rate at which the schools are becoming overcrowded, these statistics do substantiate the type of growth occurring in the town, and they point out areas that should be of concern to town officials as they plan for future services and future citizen needs. For example, are provisions being made to provide housing for residents who sell their homes and want to find a smaller local residence to either rent or buy? Does the town have sufficient recreation facilities for families and their children?

Educational Attainment

Information on the level of formal education of a town's residents can give insights into the type of population living there and the type of work for which they may be qualified. One goal of a master plan can be to encourage more employment for local citizens. While educational attainment tells nothing of many qualities of a town's population, significant disparities in education may indicate a need for focused training programs to bring peoples' job skills up to date. According to the 1980 Census, 69% of the town's residents who were over 25 had a high school diploma. This is compared with 67% for Worcester County and 72% for the state. Of the persons 18 to 24 years of age, only 30% of the residents were enrolled in some type of schooling compared to 36% and 40% for the county and state. (This figure may either represent a lower college enrollment rate or the fact that there are no colleges in the town, and its college age people were declaring residency at their schools.) Eighteen percent of the residents who were 25 or over have a college degree. This compares with 15% for the county and 20% for the state. In sum, as of 1980, the education level of Ashburnham's residents was comparable to elsewhere, and no problems were obvious.

Income Levels and the Local Economy

Income levels in a town are an important measure of whether the average resident can afford the community's housing and whether a potential newcomer can afford to relocate. This information, combined with local work force characteristics, gives a picture of the local economy and whether that economy is keeping pace with the growth occurring around it. The data used for this analysis comes from the 1980 Census and the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security (DES).

At the end of 1984, there were a total of 66 places of employment in Ashburnham that reported the earnings of their employees. (This information is from DES records and includes only those businesses that employ workers covered by unemployment insurance. Self-employed persons are not included.) The average wage paid by employers in Ashburnham was \$11,572. The previous year, 1983, the average wage paid in Ashburnham was \$11,012 compared to a Worcester Labor Market Area average of \$15,700 and a state average of \$17,343. These differences are significant and point out a potentially serious lack of well paying jobs within the town.

While the DES data give information concerning the wages paid by local firms to their employees, all employees are not necessarily local residents, and so turning to the Census is useful. The 1980 Census data pertain to the incomes and occupations of the people living in the town. The first significant statistic is that in 1980, 69% of the town's workers commuted outside the town to go to work. This translated into 1350 people traveling out of Ashburnham every morning and then back into town each evening. The median family income of Ashburnham residents was \$19,795 compared to \$17,182 and \$17,575 for the county and state, respectively. These figures on wages and commuting explain the following relationship: whereas the local employers in the town paid less than surrounding employers, the town's residents made more than households in neighboring towns because they commuted out of town to work. This higher level of income is supported by the fact that only 6% of the town's residents were classified as having incomes below the poverty level in 1980, compared to 9% and 10% at the county and state levels. Overall, this information indicates that Ashburnham residents are relatively well-off compared with the average incomes of households across the county and state. It also points out that the town does not offer many well-paid employment opportunities for its residents, and that local employment often means lower wages or part-time work.

The DES data also give information on the type of work offered within the town. These data can give a picture of the growth trends within the local economy and may give insights into the reasons for a town's income levels and prospects for future economic growth. Table 4 gives the 1984 data concerning the type of employer firms in the town of Ashburnham. These data indicate that the Local Government, Service and Retail sectors tend to pay less than Construction, Manufacturing and Fire-Insurance-Real Estate (FIRE). In all, 788 people were employed in 1984 by the 66 different businesses located in the town. (Table 4-A also gives some detail on the type of businesses operating in the town.)

Table 4. - 1984 Employment Characteristics of Ashburnham Firms by Major Economic Sectors.

<u>Sector Firms</u>	<u>Avg. Wage</u>	<u>Avg. # of Emp.</u>	<u># of</u>
Local Gov't	8395	164	11
Federal Gov't	Confidential - too few firms*		
Agriculture	Confidential - too few firms		
Construction	Confidential - too few firms		
Manufacturing	14535	175	6
Transp, Commun. and Utilities	18379	37	6
Wholesale	Confidential - too few firms		
Retail	6090	121	17
FIRE	Confidential - too few firms		
Services	11,376	228	11
Gov't Subtotal	8395	164	12
Business Subtotal	12339	624	54
TOTALS	11572	788	66

* Data is withheld in cases where, due to the small number of firms, revealing information would give proprietary information. The data are included in the subtotals and totals.

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment Security

Table 4-A - Types of Firms in Ashburnham

The following gives a more detailed list of the firms operating in Ashburnham.

Agriculture: Landscape Services
 Construction: Building Contractors, Heavy Construction, Painting
 Masonery, Roofing
 Manufacturing: Misc. Woodproducts, Household Furniture, Cutlery,
 Fabricated Metal Structures
 Transportation: Communications and Utilities: School Buses,
 Trucking, Transportation Broker, Telephone
 Wholesale Trade: Chemicals, Misc. Non-Durable Goods
 Retail Trade: Hardware, Grocery, Gas Stations, Automotive Dealer,
 Radio and TV Store, Drugstore, Liquor, Misc. Stores,
 Fuel Dealer
 Finance, Insurance, Real Estate: Insurance agents, Real Estate
 Brokers
 Services: Computer Processing, Auto Repair, Hospital, Schools,
 Social Services, Engineering and Architecture

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment Security

Data in Table 5, covering 1980 to 1983, show that the town's manufacturing sector grew by 16% compared to a 18.5% decrease within Worcester County and a 6.2% decrease across the state. Similar growth also occurred in the Wholesale and Retail sector. The 16% growth in manufacturing only represents 27 jobs and may be due to the success of one firm during the recession. Nonetheless, it is significant that Ashburnham experienced industrial growth during a period of regional decline, especially when one considers that manufacturing is the one sector in town that provides relatively higher pay. It may be that more small firms can be encouraged to locate in Ashburnham.

Table 5. - 1980 to 1983 Changes in Employment in Major Sectors within Ashburnham, the Worcester Labor Market Area and the State.

Place	Gov't	Manft	Whlsl/Retail	Services	Total
Ash	-5.8%	+16%	+12.5%	-5.8%	+4.6%
W.C.	-11.5	-18.5	-2.3	+13.5	-5.2
State	- 9.5	-6.2	+5.9	+11.7	+1.8

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment Security

Local Opinions on the Economy

The final source of information regarding the local economy was the informal interviews performed for this study. Overall, local firms feel that Ashburnham is a good place to do business and that the recent growth has helped their businesses. There is agreement that the town should have a greater mix of retail and services, as current local businesses suffer from competition in nearby Gardner and Fitchburg. The business community also states that the town should do more to attract clean industry to the town as a way to create jobs and support the tax base. In general, merchants and public officials commented that the town has historically discouraged industry and commerce through its zoning practices. Despite the desire to see more commerce and industry, there was also a recognition that problems such as traffic, parking and sewerage must be faced, or further economic development will exacerbate rather than solve problems. In general, comments concerning the local economy were optimistic, and there is much support for planning which can guide the town's future growth without unnecessarily damaging its character. One interviewee stated that he felt that the area's "quality of life" was its greatest asset, and that this factor will sustain the growth of Northern Worcester County. He believes that these qualities will ultimately pull increasing levels of economic activity into the region.

Summary of Planning Issues Raised by Demographic and Economic Trends

The data reviewed above suggest several important planning issues.

- The town's growth is being generated by its being an attractive place to live. Both newcomers and tend to work outside the town; growth is reinforcing the town's "bedroom community" qualities. An important planning issue is the cultural implication of many newcomers migrating to this rural town. Some comments suggested friction between the expectations of former urban dwellers and the traditional viewpoint of

long time residents. A concrete example of this issue is that recent immigrants encounter much difficulty running for local office. This type of "culture clash" hurts the town when experienced, willing people are discouraged from aiding the town until they have an "acceptable" term of residency behind them. The town also suffers when newcomers fail to recognize the difficulties of managing a small town on limited resources with volunteer officials. Some believe that the high rate of commuting tends to isolate these people from the town's day to day problems and that commuters, therefore, have less investment in the town's economic success.

- Other issues related to the commuting pattern are traffic flow, parking problems and highway maintenance. Assuming that the 1980 commuting rate has not decreased (by all indications it has increased), there are over 2100 commuter trips originating from Ashburnham each day. During late afternoons and Saturday mornings, Ashburnham Center is severely congested, a situation that worries merchants who fear that shoppers will be discouraged from coming to the downtown. The flow of traffic at the Main-Central streets intersection creates congestion that affects the rest of the commercial area. The tendency for drivers to park on Main Street, between Central and Pleasant streets, further aggravates the flow of traffic and creates a dangerous area for pedestrians. Finally, this increasing level of traffic also has impacts on the town's entire system of roads, given that the majority (over 60%) of the town's housing is located outside of the centers. The increase in year-round residents around the lakes has resulted in the need for the highway department to snow plow not only the main roads, but also the back roads. This is occurring at a time when the highway budget is already strapped, and maintenance funds are insufficient.

- The town's residential growth is not being balanced by concurrent commercial or industrial growth. Although employment increased in the retail and manufacturing sectors, there is very little land for new commerce or business due to anti-industry attitudes of the past (some of which linger), and restrictive zoning. The resulting lopsided tax base creates problems when new residential taxpayers place children in school; the result is a net expense to the town.

- Despite the statewide decline in industry, the town did experience some growth in manufacturing. This may be an indication of either perceptual or real locational advantages which could serve to attract additional industry if it were encouraged. The new Route 140 extension has given the town a new degree of accessibility which should be considered if land is rezoned to industrial use.

The Housing Market

As of 1980, the Town of Ashburnham contained 1849 housing units of which 1374 (74%) were year-round and 475 (26%) were seasonal. Based on building permit data since that time, the total number of housing units is most likely now over 2000. (See Table 6)

Table 6 - Building Permits Issued for Construction of Single and Two Family Homes in Ashburnham - 1980 to 1985.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Permits Issued	20	22	31	42	61	80
Avg. Rate of Growth		10%	41%	35%	45%	31%

Source: Regional Building Inspector's Office

When the town's 26% seasonal unit rate is compared to the Worcester County average of 2% and the State average of 3%, it is evident that the vacation/second home economy has played a major role in Ashburnham's development. The ratio of seasonal to year-round residences dropped significantly from 1970 to 1980 as the percentage of seasonal units went from 50% to 26% -- a fifty percent decrease. This change points out an important trend in Ashburnham: the conversion of seasonal residences to fulltime homes. Although new construction has also played an important role in the shift from a part-time housing market to fulltime market, interviews with the Building Inspector and the Board of Health pointed out that conversion is a major problem for the town in many ways.

First of all, most seasonal homes were not built to year-round construction standards. Given the demand on the Building Inspector's time, it is difficult to stay abreast of conversions and to ensure that these structures are brought up to code. This problem is magnified by a lack of definition in the zoning by-laws regarding seasonal versus year-round residences and the requirements for changes of use. Just as the construction of the building is often unsuitable for fulltime occupation, so is the septic system -- if it exists. Given the heavy development around the town's lakes, the Board of Health and the Division of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) see this situation of substandard septic systems as being a major problem in the coming years.

Second, the town roads in these historically seasonal areas were not designed to handle off-season traffic and maintenance. As a result, the Highway Department is faced with increasing miles of plowing and an overall problem of poor conditions on much of the town's 80 miles of roads. Maps 1 and 2, respectively, indicate the current legal status roads in the town and the accessibility of those roads to fire and emergency equipment. As shown, there are many miles of private, inaccessible ways in the town. Further development along these roads will increase the likelihood of the town upgrading in the future.

The demand for housing is high in Ashburnham, and as a consequence the town is growing at a very fast pace. In 1980 the town received requests for 20 new single or two-family home building permits. As of November 1985 that annual number had jumped to 81 permit requests. While growth is occurring throughout the Northern Worcester County region, Table 7 indicates the recent flood of development that has hit Ashburnham compared to neighboring towns.

Table 7 - Single Family and Two-Family Home Building Permits Issued in 1984 and 1985 in Four Northern Worcester County Towns.

<u>Town</u>	<u>1984 permits</u>	<u>1985 permits</u>
Ashburnham	60	80
Hubbardston	19	56
Templeton	27	22
Westminster	28	47

Source: Regional Building Inspector's Office

The current housing market is primarily driven by the lower cost of land in Ashburnham as compared to the Rt. 495 region. Ready-to-build lots that sell for \$100,000 in the Rt. 495 area can be purchased for \$15,000 to \$40,000 in Ashburnham. Although many new home buyers pay the price of greater commuting time to work, the benefits of a rural environment and good school system, coupled with affordability, continue to make the town an attractive location.

Relatively low home values are driving the local real estate market boom. In 1980 the median value for homes in Ashburnham was low compared with the surrounding region and the state as a whole (\$37,000 versus \$41,700 and \$48,500). Only 17% of the homes in Ashburnham were valued at over \$50,000 in 1980 compared to 24% in Worcester County and 37% across the state as a whole. (These figures consider only the year-round residences.) Purchase and conversion of a seasonal home would be even less costly, especially given that the sizes of grandfathered lots around Sunset Lake are much smaller than those required for new construction throughout the rest of the town (15,000 square feet versus 45,000).

The conditions of the existing housing stock are, overall, difficult to measure. The 1980 Census data reported that 645 (47%) of the town's homes were built before 1939. This is very comparable to county and state estimates.

Based on interviews with real estate and banking professionals, the profile of the new homebuyer crosses several demographic categories. While many of these buyers are to young families with children, there also seem to be large numbers of young couples, empty-nesters and singles; they are all seeking a single family home on a large lot that they cannot afford elsewhere. In addition, several interviewees expressed the opinion that many of the home buyers were young persons who had grown up in the general area, had moved away and were now trying to move back home.

The housing market these people face is primarily a single family one. Based on 1980 Census data, 84% of the units in Ashburnham were single family compared with 57% and 59% for Worcester County and Commonwealth, respectively. Only 16% of the total units were rentals compared with 38% and 40% for the county and state. In Ashburnham, 83% of all units were owner occupied. Multi-family dwellings in Ashburnham made up just 3% of the total; the county and state averaged at 16% and 20%.

respectively. Together, these figures verify Ashburnham's image as a small town with country homes. The problems arise for those who cannot afford, or who choose not to own and maintain, a single family residence. The options for those people-- many of them older, lifetime residents -- will become increasingly limited.

The Problem of Septic Disposal

In 1980, 69% of the housing units in town were served by town water while only 5% were served by any type of public sewer system (Cushing Academy's system). The ninety-five percent of all households remaining are all using septic systems and leach fields. This high rate of septic system usage stands in conflict with the fact that, according to a recent Soil Conservation Service soil survey, only 5% of the town's soils are even moderately acceptable for on-site sewage disposal. Over 75% of the soils were categorized as being unable to support any sewer system. (See Section II.B for more details on the town's soils). These findings must be compared with the small lot sizes found in Ashburnham Center, South Ashburnham and around some of the lakes. Studies by DEQE and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (under the federally funded 208 program) have identified low levels of pollution in the town's lakes and ponds as a result of inadequately designed or failed septic systems. Residents complain of odor from surfacing septic runoff. The Board of Health is concerned that, due to septic system contamination of on-site wells, there will be long term health problems on lots of one acre or less where town water is not available. The lack of a municipal sewer system stands in the way of further residential development of Ashburnham Center and South Ashburnham, industrial development and multi-family development, whether it be for the low to middle income or for the elderly (a recent elderly housing project was rejected by the state partly due to the lack of in-town sewerage).

A proposal to float a bond in order to cover construction of a sewer tie-in system to Gardner was presented to Town Meeting several years ago, but the article was narrowly defeated. The primary reason cited for opposition was the limited scope of the project: it would have served only the centers of Ashburnham and not the outerlying areas. Despite the serious environmental consequences, many town residents who would not benefit directly from the system voted against the project. The Board of Selectmen recently authorized an update of the study to assess the current cost of such a project.

Major Planning Issues Related to Housing

- The town's land prices are driving the real estate market. Relatively low costs mean that many people who cannot afford to buy a home elsewhere can do so in Ashburnham. Currently, low land costs are providing affordable housing in a way that other communities cannot.
- The town has a mixture of seasonal and year-round units. The conversion of seasonal units to year-round homes is causing problems related to building code requirements, waste disposal and municipal services such as roads.

- Ashburnham is a single family town. There are very few rental units and very few multi-family structures. Although mobile home parks are permitted by special permit, there are no definite criteria for acceptance, and the general town sentiment is against mobile homes. Duplexes are allowed by special permit but, again, town sentiment has discouraged their approval.

- Ashburnham is zoned for 1 acre residential development. This zoning may still be too small in areas where septic systems threaten wells and water bodies. While larger lots would more adequately handle on-site waste disposal, they would also increase the cost of housing and use up available land more rapidly. There is already concern that today's young Ashburnham natives may not be able to afford to live in their hometown in the years to come. Zoning changes are required to achieve the necessary balance of lot sizes.

B. Ashburnham's Natural Base

The Town of Ashburnham consists of 26,420 acres of land in northern Worcester County. It abuts the New Hampshire state border to the north, the Town of Ashby to the east, the City of Fitchburg and the Town of Westminster to the southeast, the City of Gardner to the south and the Town of Winchendon to the west. Although there are broad open tracts throughout the town, the terrain is primarily hilly with maximum elevations of 1800 feet above sea level. The town serves as the headwaters for the Millers River as it flows west and the North-Nashua watershed (through the Whitman River and Phillips Brook) to the southeast. In all, the town has over 1100 acres of open water in 20 lakes and ponds of 5 acres and over. Almost 9% of the town's total acreage, 2275 acres, is either open water or wetland. Approximately 60% of the town is served by municipal water drawn from Upper Naukeag Lake; the remaining dwellings use private wells. A DEQE water quality management plan done in 1980 cited excessive vegetative growth and eutrophication in Sunset Lake, Ward Pond and Stodge Meadow Pond. Failed septic systems were identified as the primary causes for this water pollution. Upper Naukeag has been given a Class A water quality classification, while all other bodies and streams are Class B. (Class A is drinkable. Class B is not recommended for consumption, but is swimmable.) The DEQE study found no indication that groundwater contamination would be a problem in the near future.

The soils are predominantly stony with some areas of sand and gravel. The predominant soil types are the Marlow Association and Marlow-Peru series. Together, these two types account for over 50% of the town's soils. These soils are classified as having severe limitations for on-site septic systems due to either wetness or excessive slope. (See Map 6.) In all, 95% of the town's soils fall into this same classification. The Massachusetts Federation of Planning Boards standards for lot sizes classifies over 75% of the town's soils as "not feasible" for septic systems. The only exception is the Berkshire Association series which consists of between 1200 and 1300 acres within the town. This series is classified as having only moderate limitations for on-site waste disposal. Overall poor soil conditions in Ashburnham were aptly put by one resident when he described the town as being "a swamp on a ledge".

The predominant land cover feature in Ashburnham is forest. Over 20,000 acres, or 76.5% of the town's total acreage, is forested. Mixed hardwood-softwood forests cover most of this land. From 1971 to 1985, 535 acres of forestland (2.6% of total forest) was cleared and developed. Although recent development has significantly increased compared with previous years, the actual amount of land converted has not affected the overall wooded character of the town. Of the 20,000 acres of forest, ten parcels are state forest lands, totaling approximately 1500 acres.

Land Use Patterns

The town's various current land uses, as of September 1985, are given in Table 8 and shown in Map 3. As discussed, forests cover the majority of the town, followed by residences (7.4%), water (6%), general open space (3.8%), agriculture (3.1%) and wetlands (2.6%). From 1971 to 1985, a total of 743 acres were changed from one use to another. Of those, 535 acres of forest was cleared and 202 acres of agricultural land was removed from farming. The greatest relative change was in the category of residential development on lots of 1 acre or more. Over 600 acres of this light residential development occurred. Map 4 indicates where land use changed between 1971 and 1985.

Table 8. - Ashburnham Land Uses in 1971 and 1985 by Total Acres and Percent of Total Acres.

Land Use	1971		1985	
	Acres	%	Acres	%
Forests	20,770	78.6	20,235	76.5
Residential	1,104	4.2	1,696	6.4
Light Indust.	51	0.2	52	0.2
Commercial	15	0.1	19	0.1
Public (schools, etc)	58	0.2	58	0.2
Open land	1,014	3.8	1,128	4.3
Agricul.	1,002	3.8	818	3.1
Recreation	77	0.3	82	0.3
Water	1,582	6.0	1,576	6.0
Wetland	699	2.6	699	2.6
Misc.	68	0.1	77	0.3
Total	26,440	100.0	26,440	100.0

Sources: 1985 Ashburnham Current Land Use Map and 1971 MacConnell Map-Down for Worcester County.

The population density in Ashburnham in 1980 was 0.15 persons per acre compared with 0.67/acre for Worcester County. Based on 1984 statewide growth estimates, the town's density was 0.17 persons per acre. These density figures point out an important fact: despite its growth rate, Ashburnham is still a rural community.

The Ashburnham Major Land Use Report of 1970 cited a total of 1202 housing units in the town. Of those total units, 665 were year-round and 537 were seasonal. The year-round homes were distributed in a pattern such that 446 were near the centers of Ashburnham and South Ashburnham, 145 were near the water and 104 were scattered in remaining areas. The seasonal homes were concentrated around the lakes; 510 were lakeshore properties. These totals resulted in 37% of total housing units located near town centers, 55% near water and 11% elsewhere.

Based on 1971 to 1985 land use changes, 55% of all developed acreage occurred near the lakes. The majority of this development was around Sunset Lake where small grandfathered lots were heavily developed resulting in high densities. The non-lake area with the highest rate of development has been Winchendon Road (Rt 12) where from 1971 to 1985, 166 acres were developed. This area accounted for 22% of the town's total land use change.

Conflicts Between Growth and the Natural Base

Recent development has resulted in several environmentally based problems facing the town. The first is the lack of a public sewage system. Given the high density of development around Ashburnham Center and South Ashburnham, combined with the poor septic suitability of those areas due to drainage and small lot sizes, the on-site waste disposal systems in place have been failing marginally for years and continue to worsen. The result is odor, pollution of local streams and a major barrier for future development in the centers. This same absence of sewerage facilities stands in the way of attracting many types of clean industry that have wastewater service requirements. Although the problem is less critical outside of the centers, there are areas of the lakes where, due to no municipal water service, well-septic system conflicts may result in health problems in the near future. According to the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, the town's local septage pumping service is also encountering problems with its storage lagoon due to run-off into nearby streams.

The necessity for septic systems causes problems due to the area's generally poor soil and slope suitability for septic disposal. Only a few areas are moderately capable of handling septic systems. In effect, parcels capable of supporting even moderate density development are a scarce resource in Ashburnham; if they are used for light density, single family housing, Ashburnham will be left with no land physically capable of supporting multi-family housing or other needed development unless a sewer system is constructed. According to estimates by the Soil Conservation Service and the Massachusetts Federation of Planning Boards, much of the town should, ideally, be held to acre and a half zoning. A study performed in the late 1970's, under the federally funded Section 208 Water Pollution Control Program, identified several areas where development would be in direct conflict with the environment due to either erosion or pollution problems. (See Map 5) Unfortunately, the town's most delicate environmental areas are its lakes, and they

have already been heavily developed. Zoning, subdivision and Board of Health requirements should all work to alleviate the effects of current development, and to protect the lakes from additional uses that might threaten their long-term health.

Another environmentally related problem is the town's landfill. The current site is quickly running out of room, and the town is working to identify other options on the advice of engineering consultants and DEQE. The existing landfill must be capped and reclaimed, and future uses must be planned that will avoid the possible hazards of a reclaimed dumping site.

C. Town Government and Growth Mangement

The demographics, economics and natural resource characteristics of Ashburnham represent both the factors that are acting on the town and the resources with which the town can work. This next section discusses the response of town government to those factors. What are the town's major problems from the perspective of local officials? How is the town dealing with the problems it faces? Where can its strategies be strengthened?

Information for this section came from a series of interviews and two working meetings done with local boards and departments and through a review of the town's land use regulations (zoning and subdivision). Local officials were asked to comment on their general opinions of recent growth issues, the problems that their offices or boards are facing due to that growth, and the action that should be taken to correct those problems. The discussion that follows will first review Ashburnham's growth management administration and then the regulatory tools of zoning and subdivision.

Growth Management Administration

Like most small New England towns, Ashburnham functions due to the commitment of its citizens who give their time and energy on a volunteer basis to manage the work of local government. While volunteers often perform their jobs well, there is a limit to the amount of time they can devote. Their work is more difficult when there is a lack of administrative and secretarial support, as in the case of Ashburnham. Currently, the town has only 3 fulltime employees in town hall. Of those, only one is in a position to help coordinate the functions of town government, and for the most part that person is devoted to the work of the Selectmen.

A 1985 report for the Municipal Improvement Program examined the staffing patterns of the town and recommended that there be more administrative coordination between the clerical staff. Throughout the interviews held for the master plan project, the sentiment was echoed that there needs to be similar administrative coordination established for the land use related boards. Too many of the boards are working in a vacuum; there is too little communication between boards, and the lack of secretarial support decreases the boards' effectiveness.

Clearly, most of these problems arise from financial constraints faced by the town and are not primarily due to a lack of recognition that such problems exist. There is, however, a lack of recognition of how much the lack of staff support and coordination costs the town in the long run. What are the costs of a subdivision that is not carefully reviewed or periodically inspected during construction? What are the costs of development that poses dangers to the environment, dangers that were not foreseen due to the lack of clear communication between the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission? What are the costs to the town when its downtown's character is changed due to a lack of historic preservation planning? What is the cost to the town in terms of a damaged environment when, due to lack of clear policies, developers who violate local regulations are not taken to court?

Overall, most boards and officials recognize that the growth faced by the town is inevitable. The major concern among local leaders is the

question of how to deal with that growth. The current growth rate is placing major burdens on the town's abilities to meet daily responsibilities and to address problems that arise. The specific problems that Ashburnham confronts are given below.

- Lack of coordination between boards - Due to the boards' isolation from one another, there is little communication. Board members come from work to a meeting; they meet, and they go home. Communicating with other boards is done through notes or phone calls. The first method is unreliable unless boards members stop at town hall frequently; the second requires that time be spent during the week trying to make contact.
- Lack of central coordination - Each board acts in relative isolation from overall town policy. The act to create this master plan is one step toward establishing a clear policy. There is also need for a person within town hall to stay in touch with the various boards and act as a liaison and coordinator.
- Lack of funds to hire professionals - Several boards cited the need to turn to professionals (especially engineers) in order to make good decisions. The funds to hire such professionals are not currently available.
- Need to strengthen some municipal services - There is need for a town sewer system, increased maintenance capacity for the Highway Department and a new fire station in a more central location so as to service the north end of town. Although the need for a town sewer system is well documented, a previous attempt to finance construction of a town sewer system was defeated on the Town Meeting floor. It is clear to the local officials that further development can not occur in the town centers unless a sewerage system is put in place.

The Highway Department faces increasing service demands with each new house that is built. In the winter snow plowing all residential roads has become an early morning priority due to the number of commuters. The increasing levels of traffic are causing road conditions to deteriorate at faster rates. This is coupled with the problem of new home construction on lake roads that were never built for year-round use.

Currently, the town has fire stations in Ashburnham Center and South Ashburnham, the majority of recent growth has been in the northern portion of the town. A new location is needed for the northernmost fire station in order to provide consistent levels of high quality fire protection, keep fire insurance rates down and provide needed station space. Another fire-protection related issue concerns the conditions of town roads. According to the fire chief, many of the roads on which development is currently occurring are not accessible to fire equipment during inclement weather. This creates an even more pressing need to strengthen the highway department's maintenance ability.

- Lack of industry and commercial tax base - Directly linked to the problem of underfunded budgets is the need to broaden the town's tax base. Currently, 64% of the tax revenues accrue from residential dwellings and only 6% are collected on industrial or commercial property. (The rest is levied on land and accessory structures.) Although location and an overall rural history play

a major part in the town's lack of a diversified economy, local attitude is also important. Local resistance to encouraging industry has resulted in a lack of industrially zoned land and an overall negative image for those seeking to relocate or begin a business. The average newcomer to Ashburnham brings children, and the cost of educating those children more than offsets the new property tax revenue. Unless the tax base is broadened, the town either faces continuing declining revenues in relation to costs, or the prospect of overriding Proposition 2^{1/2}.

- Lack of support from the District Court system - On occasions when the building inspector has taken the first steps toward enforcement through the legal system by taking violations to the District Court, the results have been frustrating. Although in more than one case the defendants were found guilty, the only punishment was a filing of their offence. This represents a problem that is out of the scope of action for the town. Their only other option is to take the defendants on to the Superior Court, but the town has been reluctant to take those steps to date.
- Reluctance to litigate - Although the direct financial costs of litigation can be high, the indirect financial and quality of life costs to a town when it does not litigate can be even more costly. There is sentiment that the town needs to take a stronger stand on going to court. The threat from developers to go to court has been sufficient to deter the town in pursuing enforcement of land use regulations. The town needs a clear policy and commitment to deal with these problems as they arise.

Overall, there is a common recognition among town officials that growth is going to occur and that it is their responsibility to prepare for that growth and make way for the new character that Ashburnham will assume as it grows. According to government volunteers, that recognition is not so easily found among the taxpayers. Many people want the town to remain as it has been -- a rural bedroom community.

The management and administration of this growing town must become more efficient. There are many ways to achieve this: computer-ization, additional clerical help, professional staff, professional consultants, better inter-board communication, and a Town Manager. The town is quickly moving past the stage where it can exclusively depend on volunteers to handle the greater workloads of a growing town. The financial and environmental costs of inefficiency are great.

Ashburnham's Current Land Use Regulations

Zoning and subdivision control are the two primary regulatory mechanisms that a town has over the development of land. When designed to support the objectives of a master plan, these tools can reach a long way toward meeting those objectives. Zoning regulates the location and type of use, lot sizes, and external characteristics that are allowed on the land. Subdivision control oversees physical development that results in the division of parcels of land into smaller lots (this encompasses road construction, the placement of drainage systems and the location of utilities such as water, sewer and electricity). Together, these regulations provide a set of guidelines for the community and developers

to follow as growth occurs. Ultimately, they are effective only if there is consistent inspection and legal enforcement. This section of the report describes the current status of the town's zoning and subdivision laws and discusses problems that relate to them.

Zoning

The zoning bylaw was written in 1958, and the latest revision occurred in 1984. The Special Permit Granting Authority is the Zoning Board of Appeals. There are five zones or use districts in the town: Residential A, Residential B, Business, Industrial and Wetland/Watershed Protection (see Map 7). The minimum lot sizes for each district are, respectively: 45,000 square feet, 45,000 square feet, 25,000 square feet and 60,000 square feet. (There is no minimum lot size for the Wetland District since no development is allowed). Based on soil conditions, discussed in Part II-B above, the one acre lot size in the majority of the residential areas does not appear to be sufficient to handle on-site septic systems. One acre lots are definitely not large enough near the lakes. There are areas near the lakes where lot sizes are one-quarter and one-half acre in size due to subdivisions that occurred before the zoning bylaw was accepted. These areas present problems due to septic system pollution of the lakes and seasonal system designs that cannot accommodate year-round use. Although town water is available in most areas, in those where it is not there are also questions of well/septic compatibility.

The majority of the town's land is zoned for Residential B development. That is followed by Residential A, Wetlands, Industrial and Business. Residential A is distinguished from B by smaller frontage requirements (150 feet versus 200 feet) and yard dimensions (see By-Law, page 13) and larger maximum lot coverage percents (25% versus 20%). Residential A covers the southern portion of town from Ashburnham Center to South Ashburnham. The only business districts are in Ashburnham Center, South Ashburnham and a small portion at the junction of Routes 101 and 119. Industry is restricted to the southwestern part of Ashburnham (which is primarily wet) and a small portion in Ashburnham Center.

The fact that Ashburnham has been a single-family community comes through clearly in the zoning by-law. The only dwellings allowed by right in the town are single-family buildings. Within those buildings, renting of rooms, a professional office and a home occupation are allowed by right. Special permits are required for two-family construction and conversion from a one-family to a two-family. Mobile home parks are allowed only with a special permit. Despite requests, few special permits have been granted for duplexes and none have been granted for mobile home parks. No multi-family structures are allowed. There is a provision for cluster development.

Given the housing situation described in Part A, this zoning by-law limits the range of housing opportunities open to Ashburnham's residents. A housing policy and a set of housing objectives must be developed and compared to current zoning regulations to decide whether the town is encouraging an appropriate mix of housing types. If such a mix is not available, the zoning may need to be changed. An obvious factor in the town's ability to handle higher density development will be whether there is a town sewer system.

Other needed changes in the by-law include the following: defining non-conforming uses, expanding the definitions section, strengthening the flood plain regulations, clarifying acceptable businesses, giving special permit authority to the Planning Board on some issues, tightening the home occupation definition, establishing a site plan review process and developing excavation and reclamation criteria.

Subdivision

The subdivision control law needs strengthening in several areas, particularly regarding preliminary plan requirements, definitive plan requirements, design standards and required improvements. The result of the current subdivision law is that the town cannot demand as extensive requirements as might be desired. Specifically, the town needs explicit requirements regarding the information they receive concerning the impacts of proposed plans, the detail of plan submissions and the responsibilities of the developer throughout the project. The design specifications for subdivisions need to be strengthened to ensure that new roads are accompanied by fire hydrants and are paved. The text of the rules and regulations needs more completeness in the definitions section, and the bonding process should be brought up to date. Additional improvements needed in the subdivision regulations include the following:

- * Strengthened plan review process
- * Site inspections during construction
- * Higher standards for road construction
- * Definition of submittal time
- * Expansion of definitions
- * Required information on status of adjoining roads
- * More specific preliminary plan
- * More clearly defined plan submission procedure
- * Higher fees
- * Procedure clarification for notification of other boards
- * Termination of free water plan designs by the town
- * Requirement that registered engineers, surveyors and landscape architects prepare and review all plans
- * Requirement for budget to hire part-time engineering assistance to review plans and make site visits
- * More required detail on septic systems design
- * Rewritten performance security section to be current with latest state legislation amendments (3/85)
- * Stronger design standards (require paving, one winter of settling before paving, roadbed design standards, identification of natural features that should be protected during development, utility and service construction standards)
- * Required planting improvements

In summary, when the zoning bylaw and subdivision regulations of the Town of Ashburnham are reviewed, it is apparent that they were not designed to meet the needs of a town with a 100-house-a-year development rate. The zoning bylaw requires changes in the following areas: industrial and commercial land uses, the clarity and definition of the overall bylaw, housing policy and development review processes. The subdivision rules and regulations require more definition in their submission requirements; fees should be raised; stronger design standards are needed; and the town must play a clearer role in the inspection of developments once construction begins.

D. Community Opinions and Values

After establishing a base of data and interviewing local officials, the final step in the process of developing objectives and recommendations was to provide ways for citizens to become involved. This was accomplished in two ways. The first avenue for public comment was through public meetings held throughout the project. The second was through the community survey.

By the end of the project, a total of eight public meetings were held at which attendees were involved in the discussion and debate. In all cases, the public was encouraged to participate in the discussion of the important issues facing the town and the consideration of the town's options for action.

The community survey was conducted by the Environmental II Class of seniors from Oakmont High School. Through a series of classes conducted by LandUse, the seniors developed a questionnaire and did 295 telephone interviews. The 295 households were randomly selected from town street lists and represented a 22% sample of the town's population of 1320 households. The interviewers gathered information on attitudes towards growth, housing, business, infrastructure and town character, as well as opinions on special town characteristics, landmarks and problems currently facing the town. The survey also generated demographic information and location of residence in order to create a representative picture of the town's current opinions on the growth impacting the town. The highlights from the survey are given below.

a. The Sample Population - For the purposes of comparing variation in response based on location within town, Ashburnham was divided into 3 general areas. Area 1 surrounded the lakes, Area 2 covered the central portion of town and Area 3 encompassed South Ashburnham. The sample population per area was as follows:

Table 9 Town Division into Areas and Households

<u>Area</u>	<u># of households</u>	<u>% of total Interviews</u>
1 (Lakes)	75	25
2 (Central)	91	31
3 (South Ash.)	65	22
Area not noted	64	22

Fifty-two percent of the respondents were female, 38% were male and 10% of the questionnaires were incomplete. In all, 65% of the people interviewed were between the ages of 21 and 50. Four percent were younger than 21 and 29% were 51 years or older. Tables 8 and 9 give information on respondents' ages and length of residency in the town.

Table 10 - Age of Respondents

Age Groups	#	%
15-21	11	4
21-30	47	16
31-40	89	30
41-50	57	19
51-60	37	16
61+	8	3
NA	8	3

Table 11 - Respondent's Length of Residency

Years	#	%
1-5	68	23
6-10	48	16
11-20	79	27
21-30	45	15
30+	48	16
NA	7	2

Comparison between areas on length of residency showed that the respondents from the lake area tended to be younger than those in other areas of the town. This finding corresponds with demographic and development trend information that suggests that younger couples are moving into the town's new housing, the majority of which is in the lakes area.

Respondents were also asked in what town they work. The majority of those interviewed worked outside of Ashburnham (75%) as shown in Table 10.

Table 12 - Location of Respondents' Place of Work

City/Town	#	%
Ashburnham	67	23
Gardner	33	11
Fitchburg	57	19
Leominster	18	6
Worcester	9	3
East of Worc.	23	8
Athol	1	<1
West of Athol	2	1
Other	5	2
NA	80	27

When these demographic characteristics of the surveyed population are compared with the 1980 Census data on the town's entire population, several points stand out.

*The sample picked up the skew in Ashburnham's population toward people who have families.

* There may have been a bias in the results towards women rather than men. The large number of incomplete questionnaires made this determination difficult. It may also be that there is a tendency for women to answer the phone or to agree to be interviewed whereas men would not.

*The rate of out-of-town employment is consistent with 1980 Census data that indicated that there are approximately 2100 commuters who leave the town each morning.

The demographic information serves as a guidepost with which to judge the degree of representativeness of the sample taken in this survey. Despite some gaps in the completion of the questionnaires, it appears that the sample did reach a cross-section of the community, not only by geography but also by demographics.

Attitudes Toward Growth

Three close-ended questions were used for opinions on general "growth" within the town. There was agreement by the majority of the population on the following two points:

*Growth is inevitable (87% agreed)

*Ashburnham needs to have growth (57% agreed)

The third growth question asked if people agreed, disagreed or were unsure whether recent growth had been bad for Ashburnham. Forty-seven percent felt that growth had not been bad, 37% felt it had been bad and 16% were unsure. In the open-ended question that asked what the town's major problems were, "growth" was often cited. Together, these responses indicate that residents recognize that, although growth may be inevitable, it is also the source of many of the town's problems.

Attitudes Toward Housing

Beyond the idea of growth, respondents were also asked to comment on housing, business, infrastructure and special town qualities. The housing results suggest that residents believe that a wider range of housing should be available, but that they are concerned about continued construction.

Due to the role that housing plays in Ashburnham's current growth, several questions were asked to determine attitudes toward residential problems: Is there enough elderly housing? Are there enough apartments? Should Ashburnham plan for more than single family housing? Should the town encourage more housing development? Should duplexes be encouraged? Can a young couple or family afford to buy a home in Ashburnham? The results from these questions are presented in Table 13.

Table 13 - Responses to Housing Questions

Question	% Agree	% Disagree	% Unsure
Enough elderly housing?	9	65	25
Enough apartments?	19	57	24
Encourage more than single family houses?	54	33	13
Encourage duplexes	39	43	17
Afford to buy?	32	51	27

These results indicate that, although there are always differing opinions, the majority of respondents stated that there is a need for a broader mix of housing types in Ashburnham: more elderly housing, more apartments and other single family houses. They also said that housing was expensive. Despite opinions that something should be done to

provide more housing, it also seems clear that duxplexes are not the favored approach. When asked if housing development in general should be encouraged, the majority (51%) said no. From the various responses it appears that residents recognize the need for more housing but at the same time have mixed feelings about actually letting it happen.

Attitudes Toward Business

In general, respondents stated that business must be brought back to Ashburnham. The existing businesses do provide some jobs, but there is a need for more local jobs (74% felt there was a need for more local jobs). Sixty-two percent stated that the town needs more retail firms and 59% felt that the town needs more industry. Overall, 73% disagreed with the statement, "The town should not encourage business". The survey appears to have produced a clear statement that the townspeople believe that the town needs more economic activity.

Attitudes Toward Infrastructure

The one question on infrastructure that stood out concerned the need for a municipal sewerage system. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents agreed that there is a need for a system. The answers were quite close (51% agreed and 44% disagreed) on whether traffic is a problem in Ashburnham. Concerning parking, 64% stated that there is a need for more space. It was a 50-50% split as to whether the town has enough playgrounds, although 63% stated that there are not enough public beaches.

Special Town Qualities

The primary message coming from the survey regarding town qualities was that residents see their town as a rural, bedroom community that must plan for the future. When asked to list the special features of the town, the majority of answers included one or more of the following: the Town Hall, Cushing, the School Boy statue, Cemetery Hill, the downtown's historic buildings, the lakes and the mountains.

Conclusion

The data gathering process and findings described above became the base upon which the objectives of this project were developed. The public participation approach used in this Master Plan produced a wide variety of opinions and information that could never have been collected if only existing information was consulted. The physical base data was extensive due to work done in the past and the updating of land use to 1985 conditions. Together, these different forms of information generated an in-depth picture of current issues and trends, and served as a solid basis from which to formulate objectives.

III. OBJECTIVES FOR THE TOWN

Once the issues and trends affecting Ashburnham were identified, these factors were translated into objectives. Objectives articulate where the town wants to head. Section IV, below, presents recommendations on how to get there.

A. Housing

Ashburnham needs to create a greater variety of housing types than are now available. This is clearly shown by the housing data review when Ashburnham was compared to other areas: the town has a relatively small number of apartments; there is no elderly housing; there is no multi-family zone in the town. This same message was apparent in the community opinion survey, where 65% of the respondents said there is not enough elderly housing and 54% of the households interviewed stated that they felt there should be more options in town beyond the traditional single family house. A similar majority stated the need for more apartments.

An important factor in the development of more diverse housing in Ashburnham is that of maintaining the town's rural character; Ashburnham's residents see their town as a rural town and want to keep it that way. Throughout the master planning process, residents expressed concern over the prospect of allowing multi-family developments that would not blend with the surrounding landscape. Any action taken by the town regarding housing must consider the impacts of such development on the community's character.

The problem of no municipal sewerage system in the town center and in South Ashburnham has a great impact on planning for housing. Since the soils surrounding the more densely developed portions of town are saturated by years of septic disposal, the lack of a sewerage system will limit the amount of development that should occur in those areas. This limitation is in contrast to the clear need for more commercial and housing land in the centers. Sixty-nine percent of the people interviewed in the survey felt there is a need for a municipal sewerage system.

THE TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM SHALL:

- 1) Encourage a wider range of housing types to be developed in the town. These shall include housing for both renters and owners.
- 2) Encourage the development of housing that is affordable to the town's present and future residents.
- 3) Protect the town's rural, single family home appearance.
- 4) Develop elderly housing in Ashburnham.
- 5) Encourage single family housing to be developed in manners other than a conventional subdivision pattern.
- 6) Prevent residential waste disposal from polluting the environment and threatening abutting lots' water supplies. (See Map 6)
- 7) Discourage housing development from occurring along roads which do not provide safe and adequate access. (See Maps 1 and 2)

B. Open Space and Recreation

Ashburnham has a tremendous resource in its state forest lands and the generally forested, hilly character of the landscape. Together, these two factors should ensure that large amounts of open space will remain. The state land shall not be developed and the mountainsides cannot be developed. Given this base of open space, the needs for Ashburnham become those of providing access and/or services to both passive and active recreational open space.

As with many other needs, financial constraints represent the biggest obstacle to improving the town's recreation and open space resources. Budgetary limits, overworked volunteer boards and municipal liability all make it difficult to raise sufficient funds. Despite these barriers, there are important projects that should clearly be pushed forward in the future. Public access to the town's many lakes was cited as a major need by residents responding to the community opinion survey (The town owns several parcels of lakeside property, but the general public is unaware of them or desires that there be formal facilities at these sites.) Although many acres of state land exist in the town, there are very few facilities or maintained trails. Due to the town's growing population, there will continue to be an increasing need for more recreation facilities such as softball and little league fields and basketball courts. Moreover, the town lacks a formal common or downtown park.

Another important aspect to open space protection is that of the visual appearance of the town. Although the hillsides may never be developed due to their steep slopes, they will offer much less to the community if no one can see them. An objective of the community should be to protect its scenic open space resources as well as the land itself. Scenic views of lakes and hills should be conserved for all the town's future residents.

A final important issue regarding open space and recreation is that of local awareness. According to residents and local board representatives, there is an overall lack of awareness of the many recreational opportunities the town already has available. This situation is exacerbated by the general lack of knowledge residents have concerning the open space and recreational needs of the community. Only if people know about needs and opportunities will they respond.

THE TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM SHALL:

- 1) Find funds to protect land and scenic views.
- 2) Increase awareness of existing lake resources and provide public access to the town's lakes where required.
- 3) Press for the provision of facilities in the state forest lands.
- 4) Make the town's residents aware of the recreational resources that currently exist.
- 5) Use open space planning to protect water resources.
- 6) Provide more active recreation facilities.
- 7) Find public and private funds to assist the town in its open space objectives.
- 8) Prepare a formal open space plan. (See Map 8 and Map 10)

C. Commerce and Industry

The opinion survey indicated that there has been a significant change in Ashburnham's attitude toward the need for industry in the town. Until the early 1900's, Ashburnham had a thriving furniture industry that provided jobs and wealth to support the town's growth and development. Since that time, however, there has been a negative attitude toward bringing industry back to Ashburnham (for example a brewery was turned away). The opinion survey indicated that the majority of the town's residents now believe that more business and industry must be encouraged to come to town. The current reliance on residential properties to provide tax revenues for government operations results in a low overall revenue/expenditure ratio due to the school costs associated with families. Ashburnham residents recognize that business is needed to strengthen their tax base.

Residents have also made it clear that any new business should fit with the character and resources of Ashburnham. It is important that the town recognize that there are limits to the type of businesses that may be attracted to the town due to few access roads and the lack of a sewerage system. Any efforts on the town's part to bring business to Ashburnham must try to work within these limitations.

Whereas the rationale may be uncertain as to why a light industrial firm might locate in Ashburnham, the reasons for a growing commercial sector are clear. The town's rapidly growing population and its relative high level of average household income combine to create a strong environment for expanding retail and service businesses. The major problems facing the town are those of "how much?" and "where?". The major retail area in town is in the town center where there is currently little undeveloped land. The majority of the structures are large single family houses that are currently used for office space, student housing, retail and/or family residential. Unless more space is created in the downtown, the only option for commercial growth will be in the outlying areas.

The lake region of town has seen the majority of growth in recent years and currently houses the majority of the town's population. There are very few retail services in that area, and most people travel to the town center to shop. This inflow of people, combined with a lack of parking space, results in traffic congestion that redirects local shoppers towards other markets, such as Gardner and Fitchburg. The congestion of the downtown along with the distribution of population in the lakes region creates a situation where the town must make some hard choices regarding where future commercial growth should occur.

THE TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM SHALL:

- 1) Encourage appropriate light industry to move to or expand within Ashburnham.
- 2) Work to create more local jobs.
- 3) Work to broaden the town's tax base.
- 4) Plan for more efficient land use in the downtown.
- 5) Encourage the local economy to serve more of the needs of Ashburnham residents.
- 6) Protect the architectural and historical character of the downtown as a basis for guarding its long term viability.
- 7) Encourage a healthy business economy in South Ashburnham.
- 8) Work with local employers to ensure that existing jobs remain in the town.

D. Infrastructure

Ashburnham, like every town and city in the Commonwealth, is faced with the dilemma of how to provide better services with less money. The tax cap put in place by Proposition 2^{1/2} restricts the amount that towns can raise through property taxes, and also the amount that revenues can increase, to a limit of 2^{1/2} percent per year. This fiscal restriction is acting on town government at the same time that new housing and economic development demand that services be at least maintained to previous levels and preferably upgraded. Few towns and cities are keeping up with the fiscal restraint imposed by Proposition 2^{1/2}, and Ashburnham is no exception.

Several important infrastructure needs confront the town, including: road maintenance, installation of a municipal sewerage system, finding an alternative to the current landfill site, reuse of municipal buildings, construction of more classrooms, relocation of the Highway and Fire Department facilities, downtown parking and traffic flow and, finally, future plans for protecting and extending the town's water system.

Ashburnham has over 80 miles of roads that are currently maintained by the highway department. Many of these roads are in various states of disrepair due to limited funds and staff within the highway department. It is important that the town have a clear sense of the state of its road system and the maintenance needs of that system for the future in order to plan for improvements. Given the already overloaded maintenance schedule of the highway department, the town must carefully review any new roads proposed in subdivisions to ensure that they will not be an undue burden on the town due to poor construction. In the same respect, construction along roads which have previously been seasonal must be monitored and the costs of upgrading shared by the development community. (See Maps 1 and 2.)

The lack of a municipal sewerage system has been a problem in Ashburnham for many years. Previous attempts to move the project forward were thwarted by the community's questions over how the costs and benefits would be shared. The lack of progress has now placed the town in a position where it's development options for Ashburnham Center and South Ashburnham are constrained due to the oversaturation of the soil by septic effluent. How can industrial development proceed on any large scale since the town cannot offer waste disposal services. The need is clear; the only question is that of when the townspeople will act.

The town's current solid waste disposal site has only several months of capacity left before it must, by state regulations, be closed. The town has been very active on this issue and has identified options for waste disposal in the future. No matter what course is taken, the result will be a significant cost to the town and the town's residents. Although the specifics of the landfill question have been outside the scope of this project, it is clear that one objective for the town must be to continue to address solid waste disposal problems until some satisfactory resolution is found.

The Dolly Whitney Adams School, the Stevens Public Library, the Memorial Elementary School, the Highway Department buildings and the Fire Department building are all municipal structures that are now or may in the future be in a state of transition. There is a need for an overall capital reuse plan for town owned buildings in order to coordinate the most efficient use of these facilities. The Dolly Whitney Adams Reuse Committee and the Town Hall space utilization committee are examples of the type of planning that is needed, although the town would benefit from an even broader approach.

The local school system is near capacity in several grades. The cost of construction would be shared with the state, but a significant amount will still be required from the town. The long range financial implications of a new school facility must be a major part of capital planning.

The current location of the town highway and fire departments is directly in the center of the downtown area. Given the need for more parking and development space in the town center, these facilities should be relocated. Both departments agree that their services could be more efficiently provided from other locations, and each has identified potential locations. (See Map 9) The traffic congestion that interferes with residential traffic flow also stands in the way of highway and fire equipment that need to move through town. Additionally, a move is warranted since the fire department must either relocate the main facility or build a branch station near North Ashburnham due to the growth occurring in that area.

Given that downtown traffic and parking problems exist and that if the highway and fire facilities are relocated there will be buildings and land to be planned, the town should begin the process of preparing a downtown plan. (See Map 11) This plan should lay out the possibilities for the area and identify the constraints that must be considered when decisions are made. The downtown is small, and its land area is limited. If major mistakes are made in new architecture, unplanned traffic flows or poor building sitings, the damage will not be easy to repair, and the effects will be significant. A plan could create a base of consensus on how the area should develop and how it should be protected.

Finally, Ashburnham has an exceptional resource in its many lakes. The water supply is clean and can serve the needs of the town for many decades to come. It can meet those needs, however, only if it is protected. The land surrounding Upper Naukeag is held in private hands, and there are no provisions to restrict how the land is developed. Additionally, the Town of Winchendon draws its water supply from the same lake, and it is questionable whether there is an adequate amount to meet the needs of both growing communities. If Ashburnham does attract industry, it will have to provide sufficient water to meet their needs? Additionally, the town's water system serves between 60% and 70% of the households in Ashburnham, if growth in the northern portion of town continues, there may need to be plans to extend the system. The future costs of repair and maintenance must also be considered today in order to plan for future capital financing.

THE TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM SHALL:

- 1) Achieve the installation of a municipal sewerage system.
- 2) Find alternatives for solid waste disposal facilities.
- 3) Provide adequate educational facilities.
- 4) Protect the water resources of the town.
- 5) Plan for the future needs of the downtown.
- 6) Plan for the future capital improvement needs of the town.
- 7) Make the most efficient use of land in the downtown.
- 8) Use the town's capital facilities in the most efficient manner.

E. Protection of Important Features

This topic can be looked at in two ways: natural features and built features. The natural features that should be protected include important ecological habitats, natural resources needed by people (i.e. water and recreational areas), scenic views and open spaces. Important built features include historic houses, town buildings, other significant architecture that expresses the town's character (i.e. barns), stone walls, fences and scenic roads. All these factors are critical to maintaining the character of Ashburnham and keeping it as an attractive rural town.

The two basic approaches to protecting these resources are historic preservation planning and open space planning. In each case, the town will need to assess its resources and identify the most important features that should be protected. From there, zoning and other protective strategies can be developed.

THE TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM SHALL:

- 1) Identify the features of the town which are important to maintaining the town's character.
- 2) Find ways to protect those features for the social and economic benefit of the community as a whole.
- 3) Work to make the residents of Ashburnham aware of critical features in the town and of the importance of protecting those features.

F. Growth Management

The town is in the midst of such a rapid period of growth that it is important that all town boards and offices think about how the town can manage this growth. This final group of objectives is not limited to one particular set of problems, but instead addresses the need for the town to design strategies that address all the various needs and opportunities it faces. In particular, these objectives should guide the way for the town to ensure rewarding, efficient and effective volunteer involvement by residents.

THE TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM SHALL:

- 1) Achieve close cooperation between land use related boards and departments.
- 2) Achieve efficient and consistent communication between land use related boards and departments.
- 3) Centralize the coordination of land use issues in order to create a clearer source of contact for the community and to

- improve intra-board coordination.
- 4) Provide more financial resources for growth management.
- 5) Provide administrative support for land use related boards and departments.
- 6) Create ways for more citizens to become involved with town government.
- 7) Improve communication between town government and residents.
- 8) Make the public more aware of important issues and the importance of public participation.
- 9) Develop a clear policy of explaining growth management objectives to the public and of enforcing decisions that relate to those objectives.
- 10) Provide needed professional support to town boards when those boards do not have sufficient expertise.

Conclusion

The objectives of this Master Plan are the basis for the recommendations that follow in the next chapter. These objectives stand at the core of the Master Plan, for they express the priorities of the town. Although the methods used to reach those objectives may change, the direction should hold its course.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow are the result of the combined input and insights of local citizens, officials, and LandUse. This study's recommendations are presented in two forms; first by topic and then by government board and department. The first approach gives the overall strategies that the town can use to deal with a given planning issue, while the final part gives the specific step by step work that must be done by the various boards and departments in order to meet the town's objectives. Those specific steps are amplified in the Blueprint for Growth, a working document accessory to this report.

I. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Housing Recommendations

- 1) That a multi-family district be created in the zoning bylaw which will allow the development of small-site, multi-family units with site plan approval from the Planning Board.
- 2) That two-family houses be allowed by right in all R-A and R-B zones, that the minimum lot size for two family houses be 90,000 square feet and that the frontage requirements for two-family dwellings be 200 feet in the R-A district and 250 feet in the R-B District.
- 3) That single family to two family conversions be allowed by right.
- 4) That town-owned land located near the center of town be set aside for an elderly housing project.
- 5) That the Housing Authority identify land outside of the center that would serve as good sites for public-private housing developments.
- 6) That the town apply for Chapter 667 Elderly Housing funds, Downtown Mixed Use Elderly Housing Development funds and Chapter 707 Scattered Site Housing Funds from the Executive Office of Communities and Development.
- 7) That the town encourage cluster developments by reducing the minimum acreage requirement from 10 acres to 6 acres and that a density bonus be given to developers who provide public recreation land as either a component of the development or as an associated donation to the town.
- 8) That housing development along substandard roads be better regulated by accepting an official "town road map" and using that map when either approving or denying "approval not required" applications. This same map should be used when negotiating with a developer concerning road improvements on subdivision requests.
- 9) That if a private, non-profit community development entity is formed, such as a land trust, this organization should apply for the State Housing Assistance for Rental Production (SHARP) program in order to stimulate the production of privately owned rental housing.
- 10) That the zoning bylaw be amended to specifically allow second story apartments above commercial uses.

11) That Town Meeting appropriate funds to hire grantwriting services in order to apply for a Strategic Planning Grant so as to hire a fulltime planner/grantwriter.

B. Open Space and Recreation

1) That the Parks and Recreation Board stay alert to possibilities for the town to acquire more recreation land on any of the lakes. Federal and state assistance to provide up to 50% of acquisition costs is available through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

2) That a formal open space plan be prepared by the Parks and Recreation Board and the Conservation Committee in which the town's open spaces are clearly assessed and future objectives for easement or acquisition are defined. The Massachusetts Self Help Program provides 50% funding support for acquisition of passive recreation and conservation lands.

3) That Town Meeting appropriate funds to allow the Parks and Recreation Board to work with volunteers or a high school class to prepare a brochure that gives information on the various recreation resources (both passive and active) available in the town.

4) That a strategy be prepared by the Water Board and Conservation Commission to protect the remaining open spaces around the town's water supply in Upper Naukeag.

5) That the Parks and Recreation Board review the current list of potential tax title properties and identify areas that should be considered for town ownership if the opportunity arises.

C. Commerce and Industry

1) That the minimum lot size for commercial uses be decreased from 25,000 square feet to 12,000 square feet.

2) That town owned property currently used for the fire station and Highway Department lot be studied and plans made for allowing some of that property to be used for commercial development.

3) That the Industrial Development Commission and the Board of Selectmen organize a meeting to bring local businesspeople together and identify ways to encourage more business activity in Ashburnham.

4) That the town rezone land from residential use to industrial.

5) That the town not rezone more land for commercial use, but rather that commercial uses be encouraged to concentrate in the town centers.

6) That the zoning bylaw be more specific regarding the requirements for Home Occupations and Professional Offices.

7) That the town adopt a site plan review amendment to the zoning bylaw which will, in part, establish site criteria for commercial and industrial development.

8) That Town Meeting appropriate funds to the Planning Board for the preparation of a formal downtown plan and that an important component of that plan be provisions for commercial development in Ashburnham Center.

D. Infrastructure

- 1) That the Board of Selectmen continue to aggressively pursue the objective of installing some type of town sewerage system.
- 2) That the Board of Selectmen continue to pursue their investigation of options for solid waste disposal.
- 3) That the Highway Department and Fire Station be relocated to other areas within the town and that the projects be financed through the Farmer's Home Administration Community Facilities Program.
- 4) That the Fire Department and Highway Department each prepare a report on their relocation needs.
- 5) That some of the land currently used for the Highway Department lot or Fire Station be used for public parking once the relocation of those departments is complete.
- 6) That the Board of Selectmen request that a traffic study be done by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission as a part of the downtown plan and that options for changing traffic patterns on side streets be examined.
- 7) That the Water Board and Fire Department prepare a report that assesses the future needs of the town concerning the extension of water lines.
- 8) That the Water Board take formal steps to clarify the relationship between the Town of Winchendon and the Town of Ashburnham concerning the water supply in Upper Naukeag Lake.
- 9) That the Planning Board begin the process of examining the feasibility and appropriateness of a bypass for Route 12 around Ashburnham Center.

E. Protection of Important Features

- 1) That the Historic Commission complete its inventory of Ashburnham Center, and that the Board of Selectmen appoint an Historic Inventory Report Committee to file a Local Historic District report to the Massachusetts Historic Commission.
- 2) That a Local Historic District be established in Ashburnham Center by town bylaw.
- 3) That the Historic Commission organize a workshop on downtown historic preservation in conjunction with the Main Street Program and the Massachusetts Historic Commission to increase residents' awareness of the importance of preserving their historic buildings.

4) That a university landscape architecture studio prepare a downtown design plan for the Town of Ashburnham.

5) That the open space plan prepared by the town identify sites, views and landmarks that must be protected in the future and that strategies for protection be developed.

6) That the Planning Board introduce an amendment to the Zoning Bylaw to create a Water Supply Protection District around Upper Naukeag.

F. Growth Management

1) That the Board of Selectmen encourage the formation of a Development Board to be made up of chairpeople and department heads of all boards and departments that relate to land use in the town and that this group act as the advisory steering committee for all land use related decisions in the town. All subdivision proposals should go before this board and the board should meet quarterly to review the land use changes occurring within the town.

2) That Town Meeting appropriate funds to hire one fulltime secretary to provide support for land use related boards.

3) That the Board of Selectmen form Support Committees for the boards which show clear need for assistance. These committees should be made up of people who have an interest in giving time to town government. Each board that believes it has a need for a support committee should submit to the Board of Selectmen a brief memo on what specific projects would be assigned to that committee.

4) That funds be provided through Town Meeting to allow the various boards to mail their minutes to one another.

5) That the town identify either the administrative assistant or the new secretary to act as a coordinator for land use related business. All contacts to the town would be made through this person and he or she would be responsible for ensuring smooth lines of communication between the public and the boards and also between the boards themselves.

6) That the town consider creating a position of Town Manager who, along with providing consistent management for the town, would act as a grant writer and coordinator for land use related projects.

7) That Town Meeting provide funds to support legal action by the land use boards of Ashburnham.

8) That the Board of Selectmen clarify their policy regarding litigation toward violators of town laws and regulations.

9) That Town Meeting appropriate the necessary funds to provide engineering support to the Conservation Commission and Planning Board.

10) That the Planning Board include a development impact assessment form in the subdivision regulations and that a developer checklist be used to clarify developer and town responsibilities during the development process.

11) That the Board of Health prepare a cost/benefit analysis of the services being provided by the Nashoba Board of Health to the Town of Ashburnham.

12) That the town make the following general changes to the zoning bylaw:

- Define non-conforming uses more clearly
- Expand the definitions section
- Strengthen Flood Plan Regulations
- Clarify the Professional Office and Studio uses
- Clarify roadside display requirements
- Expand list of acceptable and not-acceptable businesses
- Define "light industrial" uses
- Require permit for temporary occupation of trailers
- Further define home occupation section
- Clarify special permit criteria
- Insert excavation and reclamation requirements
- Require sign permits
- Increase setbacks

G. Private Initiative - A Land Trust

It is recommended that interested private citizens of the town consider the formation of a land trust to accomplish the following goals:

- 1) To protect significant properties by arranging for title easements.
- 2) To protect significant properties by placing options to buy and finding buyers whose goals are similar to those of the Land Trust.
- 3) To protect significant properties by purchasing those properties and either manage them or place restrictions within the deeds and then place them back on the market.
- 4) To provide for a more varied mix of housing by purchasing property, doing a limited housing development project and reselling the remaining property.

H. Recommendations Specific to Town Boards and Departments

In order to lay the groundwork for implementation of this Master Plan's objectives, this next section will give the specific action steps that should be taken by local government. Each board or department that is involved with land use is reviewed in terms of how that board's work must proceed so as to meet the Master Plan's objectives. This section also serves as the body of the Blueprint for Growth. The recommendations are listed by the priorities as suggested by LandUse, with "1" indicating the highest priority item. Although boards may decide to shift their priorities, the important point is that priorities must be set.

Board of Selectmen

The Board of Selectmen play a critical role in the planning for any town, because it is through their support or rejection of planning objectives that the general public often forms its own opinions. In the end, Town Meeting votes often hinge on the stance of the Board of Selectmen.

It is recommended that the Board review its accomplishments on a yearly basis and set new short term objectives for itself as required. Time and experience, along with the town's overall goals and objectives, will be the best guide for developing future action strategies.

The major recommendation from this study is that the Board of Selectmen must work to find innovative ways to improve government efficiency. Either the Board must encourage Town Meeting to allocate more funds toward administration, or the Board must find ways to make local government work efficiently with what it has. The Board has already taken steps in this direction through the formation of the Financial Advisory Committee, the creation of the Administrative Assistant's position and the work done on space utilization in the Town Hall.

Important Projects to Continue

1. Pursue the closing of the current landfill and prepare alternatives for future waste disposal.
2. Pursue the installation of the sewer system.

Projects to initiate in the next 3 months

1. Clarify and support a town litigation policy regarding land use administration.
2. Create a Development Board.

Projects to initiate within 6 months

1. Encourage the creation of Support Committees for the various town boards.
2. Identify ways to strengthen the economy by working with local businesspeople.
3. Study the feasibility of funding of a part-time assistant building inspector/zoning enforcement officer.
4. Appoint an Historic Inventory Committee.
5. Support the preparation of a downtown plan.
6. Support the development of an open space plan.

Projects to initiate within 1 year

1. Allocate funds and staff time for grantwriting.
2. Relocation of the fire station and highway department lot.
3. Pursue the proposal made by Cushing Academy to purchase streets from the town.

Projects to initiate within 2 years

1. Work with the Recreation and Parks Board on using Cushing road funds to purchase and maintain recreation land.

Planning Board

The Planning Board has responsibility for the preparation of the Master Plan and the subsequent monitoring to ensure that the town stays upon its chosen course. In the same way, many of the actions recommended by the Plan are also the responsibility of the Planning Board. An important factor in the success of the Planning Board's implementation work will be working closely with other boards, publicizing the need for future study and land use controls, and identifying people within the community who are willing to give time to Planning Board projects.

Projects to Initiate within 3 months

1. Increase zoning to 60,000 square feet for all residential buildings in the R-B District.
2. Adopt a Site Plan Review amendment to the Zoning Bylaw.
3. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to create a Water Supply Protection District around Upper Naukeag.
4. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow two-family dwellings by right in R-A and R-B district. Increase the lot size per two family dwelling to 90,000 square feet. Increase the frontage requirements for two-family dwellings to 250 feet in the R-B district and 200 feet in the R-A district.

Projects to Initiate within 6 months

1. Review the roads in town and make recommendations for discontinuance.
2. Work with the Board of Health to create a Septic System Inspection Program.
3. Identify projects that could be performed by a Planning Board Support Committee.
4. Develop a comment/reaction form to be submitted to all other land use boards.
5. Create a Developer Checklist.
6. Create a Development Impact Statement to be completed by all developers who submit definitive plans.

Projects to be Initiated within 1 year

1. Begin preparation of a Downtown Plan, with a special emphasis on traffic, parking, historic preservation, commercial development, current fire station and highway department properties.
2. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to reduce the minimum required lot size per cluster development to 6 acres from the current

- minimum of 10 acres.
- 3. Identify and rezone an area of land in North Ashburnham to Limited Commercial.
- 4. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to tighten up the home occupation requirements.

Projects to Initiate within 2 years

- 1. Amend the Zoning Bylaws to create a multi-family or garden housing district.
- 2. Rewrite the Zoning Bylaw.

Projects to initiate within 5 years

- 1. Monitor industrial land requirements in the town and recommend rezoning if necessary.
- 2. Prepare a conceptual plan for the construction of a bypass of Route 12 around Ashburnham Center.
- 3. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to decrease or remove the minimum lot size required for commercial uses in the Business District in conjunction with the installation of public sewerage.

Building Inspector

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

- 1. Prepare a report on the costs and duties of a part-time Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Conservation Commission

Projects to be initiated within 3 months

- 1. Apply for funds to hire engineering services to monitor subdivision construction and compliance with the Wetlands Act.

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

- 1. Create a wetlands map "in-the-works" and update that map using site inventories done by the Conservation Commission and a support committee.
- 2. Arrange for a workshop by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions on Wetlands Identification.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

- 1. Prepare an open space and recreation plan with the Parks and Recreation Board.
- 2. Publicize the tax and community advantages of donating conservation land to the Conservation Commission.

Development Board

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

- 1. Monitor growth of all types in town.
- 2. After monitoring, recommend action to the appropriate board.
- 3. Monitor follow-up action of boards.
- 4. Present an annual written report to Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen concerning the previous year's

activities.

Finance Advisory Board

Projects to be initiated within 3 months

1. Finalize Capital Improvements Plan

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Review the relocation reports from the Fire and Highway Departments

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Take responsibility for analyzing the Cushing Academy road purchase proposal.

Fire Department

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Prepare a relocation report.
2. Review subdivision plans and recommend water lines improvements and fire equipment access specifics.

Board of Health

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Prepare or update a report on the costs and benefits of the current Nashoba/Ashburnham relationship.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Work with the Planning Board to create a Septic System Inspection Program.

Highway Department

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Prepare a relocation report
2. Work with the Planning Board to develop town road standards.

Historic Commission

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Prepare for and propose a Downtown Local Historic District for the Fall 1986 Town Meeting.
2. Organize a workshop on historic preservation for the general public.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Work with the Planning Board on a Downtown Plan and prepare downtown design standards.

Projects to be initiated within 2 years

1. Examine the feasibility of establishing design standards and a Design Review Board.
2. Inventory the town's mill buildings and mill housing to determine if any are of historic significance.

Housing AuthorityProjects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Continue plans for elderly housing in downtown.
2. Work with the Planning Board on the Downtown Plan.
3. Through the Selectmen's Office, submit grants for public housing funding.

Projects to be initiated within 2 years

1. Find land outside center for public/private project.

Industrial Development AuthorityProjects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Reactivate.
2. Work with Board of Selectmen to bring business people together with local government.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Identify land for future rezoning to industrial.

Light Board

Receive plans for and comment on all subdivisions.

Recreation and ParksProjects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Prepare a publicity campaign to make Ashburnham residents more aware of local recreation opportunities.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Work with the Conservation Commission on an Open Space and Recreation Plan.
2. Review the list of tax title properties.
3. Investigate the financial resources necessary to expand the town's recreation resources and programming (specifically liability insurance for a beach).

Projects to be initiated within 5 years

1. Identify more lakeside properties for potential acquisition by the town.

School CommitteeProjects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Continue with the preparation of school facilities plan.

Town MeetingProjects to be initiated within 3 months

1. Provide funds for secretary for land use administration boards.
2. Funds for legal assistance.
3. Funds for engineering assistance to Planning Board and Conservation Commission.

Projects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Provide funds for part-time assistant to Building Inspector.
2. Funds for mailing minutes between various boards.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Funds to hire a town administrator.
2. Provide funds for a Downtown Plan and Open Space.
3. Support elderly housing financial requests.

Water BoardProjects to be initiated within 6 months

1. Follow through with repair and extension plans.

Projects to be initiated within 1 year

1. Prepare a written water extension plan report for use as a guide for future development.

Projects to be initiated within 2 years

1. Prepare a strategy for negotiating with the Metropolitan District Commission, should that agency decide that it is interested in acquiring access to the town's water resources.
2. Formalize an agreement between Ashburnham and Winchendon concerning Winchendon's overuse of Upper Naukeag and steps being taken by Winchendon to resolve the problem.

Zoning Board of Appeals

Keep the lines of communication between the ZBA and the Planning Board open.

Land Trust

1. Apply for SHARP program.
2. Create limited, moderate income housing development
3. Acquire deed restrictions.
4. Work to arrange below-market buyouts.
5. Receive tax advantaged contributions.
6. Acquire first options on properties.

V. CONCLUSIONS

A. Using the Master Plan

The objectives and recommendations developed by this master planning process should serve to direct land use decisionmaking and action for many years. This project's approach of involving the community in the formation of objectives and recommendations has produced a master plan that is optimistic yet pragmatic. The master plan consists of this report, a master plan map that illustrates growth objectives for the future and the "Blueprint for Growth", a document that lays out specific tasks and timelines for all the boards and departments that are involved with land use in Ashburnham. Additionally, a capital improvements plan was prepared for the town as a part of this project to identify priorities for planning the town's capital stock. Together, these elements give the Town of Ashburnham a base of information on where the town stands today, a set of objectives that point out where land use regulation can work to strengthen the town's future and, finally, recommended steps that town boards and departments can take to reach the town's objectives.

B. Ashburnham in the Year 2000

If the values and emotions of the residents of Ashburnham have been successfully translated into this master plan, one can begin to sketch a picture of Ashburnham as citizens would like to see it in the future. That picture can also be contrasted to the Ashburnham that could be if no action is taken to guide land use decisionmaking.

A good place to start when imagining how Ashburnham might be in the future if no action is taken is to think of its physical appearance when entering the town by Rt 101, Rt 12 or Rt 119. If development fills up all available open space along these roads, it would not only give a crowded feeling along these "gateways" but it could also block views of the town's forests and lakes. The initial impression one receives when driving into town is a rural one; that could change.

An important part of Ashburnham today is the historical look of the downtown. Although some changes have taken place in recent years, the area's prominent historic buildings and Cushing Academy still add together to make a downtown that is very attractive. The downtown is in a state of transition, however, as there is increasing pressure for commercial development. The traffic congestion of today will not lessen unless measures are taken to provide more parking and encourage shoppers to avoid the Main Street parking jam. If commercial development proceeds without adequate planning for the increased traffic flow, these problems will only increase.

If current residential development trends were allowed to continue, most roads in the town would be built up with houses and the strain on the town to provide highway repair and upkeep would continue. Although this type of building would provide much needed housing, there would also be prices to pay when housing created more costs to the town than it generated in tax revenues. Additionally, there are areas that should not be developed unless a municipal sewerage system is installed.

The single family construction trends of 1986 are producing homes that are affordable to those moving in from other areas, but there is some question whether those homes are affordable to long time residents. This type of construction is also not providing homes for people who do not want a full size home and lot or who would rather rent an apartment.

The many lakes of Ashburnham provide one of the town's most special resources. Many people moved to the town just to live along Sunset, Lower Naukeag or Winnekeag. The town's proximity to metropolitan areas combined with these beautiful qualities have made Ashburnham a highly desirable place to live, yet only those who own land on a lake currently have developed access to the water and parking space for swimming or boating. If those lakes are not protected the town stands to lose not only one of its major scenic and recreational features, but also its water supply. Even if the lakes are protected through careful monitoring of septic systems, and land surrounding Upper Naukeag is protected from development, the problem of lack of public facilities on the water will still not be solved.

But, imagine instead the Town of Ashburnham in the year 2000 assuming that objectives are set and solid land management occurs. (See Maps 9, 10 and 11.) If the open spaces along the town's gateways are protected, then the forests and fields will still be there and the views of the mountains will strike everyone who drives into the town. (See Map 8) With good planning Ashburnham's downtown will be a place where there are sidewalks and benches along the major streets and pedestrians will be safe walking along Main Street. Parking will be directed to areas that lessen the traffic congestion. The historic buildings will be protected through a historic district bylaw so that existing structures will always maintain their integrity and new buildings will add to, rather than detract from, the downtown's character. Efficient reuse of the Highway and Fire departments' lots will provide new commercial, housing and parking space to the downtown. The additional retail space will augment the town's current retail economy by providing a wider range of services to residents. The added commercial property taxes will strengthen the town's financial situation. Well-designed projects will visually link Cushing Academy with the downtown to create a more unified appearance.

The housing picture will be one that will continue to attract new residents and encourage current residents to stay on. By discouraging development on roads that are substandard and charging user fees for private roads maintained by the town, new construction will not place undue financial burdens on the town. Development will be encouraged along roads that now provide safe access. Recommended new setback requirements will require that new houses be sited farther back from the road; this will preserve the appearance of rural roads. Cluster developments will be encouraged by giving density bonuses to developers, while at the same time requiring that new clusters have combined septic systems that will facilitate eventual hook-up to a municipal sewer system. This type of development will encourage builders to site houses in groups surrounded by open space away from the roadsides. The installation of a municipal sewerage system will give developers much more flexibility to site homes in ways that fit with the visual landscape, rather than the constraints of the town's poorly drained, ledgy soils. Well-designed zoning regulations governing multi-family structures will encourage construction of apartments and condominiums that fit with the landscape of Ashburnham, while at the same time

providing a broader mix of housing types. Ashburnham will be a place that will be not just affordable to newcomers, but also to its natives.

Using local, state and federal resources, land will be acquired along a lake and a public beach established forever. The public's awareness of existing resources such as the state forests will grow and there will be a greater interest in conserving land for active and passive recreation. Promotion efforts will encourage landowners to donate land for perpetual conservation. The forest, fields and lakes of Ashburnham will be protected for future generations.

The major question raised by this Master Plan is not one of "how" the citizens of Ashburnham can guide the development of their town, for there are methods. The important question is one of "whether" they will guide their future. To do so will require the time and commitment of more people than just those currently involved in town government. It will require not only the commitment of time, but also of financial resources and good planning.

The local government of Ashburnham is exceptionally blessed with many people who give extraordinary amounts of time and energy to helping their town. The town is already headed in the right direction towards solving some of its problems. There are many more issues with which to joust, however, and the support of the rest of Ashburnham's citizens will be essential all along the way.

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APPENDIX

TECHNICAL MATERIALS

SURVEY MATERIALS

MODEL WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION DISTRICT

MODEL GARDEN HOUSING DISTRICT BYLAW

FISCAL IMPACT DATA

MODEL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT STATEMENT

SURVEY MATERIALS

To incorporate community opinion into the Master Planning process, the Planning Board initiated a townwide survey. The survey was designed and performed by the students of the Environmental II Class of Oakmont Regional High School under the direction of Ms. Shirley Griffin. In all, 295 households were contacted by telephone and responded to the survey questionnaire. The responses were coded by the students and analysis was done by LandUse, Incorporated.

The sample population was all residents of Ashburnham given in the Town's street list. The street list was divided into 12 parts and each student called every third household on their part of the list. Times of calling, refusals and interview times were all recorded.

The questionnaire used in the survey was designed by the high school students with supervision and input from the Planning Board, LandUse and Ms. Griffin. A copy of the questionnaire is included with this appendix. The format consisted of 24 agree-disagree-unsure questions concerning growth issues in town, followed by 4 open ended questions on respondents' opinions of special character, landmarks and problems. Demographic questions were also asked.

Coding of questions was done on the questionnaire. Data was entered and analysed on an IBM PC statistical package. Analysis consisted of frequency cross-tabulations. Summary statistics from the analysis are included with this appendix.

Master Plan Opinion Survey

Interviewer's Initials _____

Person being interviewed _____

Date _____

Hi. My name is _____. I'm a senior at Oakmont and I'm working on a survey for the Town of Ashburnham's Master Plan Project. The purpose of the project is to find ways to help guide the town's future growth and we're calling residents throughout the town to ask for your opinions on the issues facing Ashburnham. It only takes five minutes and I would appreciate your comments on the brief set of questions we have put together.....Thank you.

First of all, do you still live on _____ street? Yes _____ No _____
(If "no", ask for current address.)

Location _____

For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you agree, disagree or are unsure.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	(Code)
1. Traffic is not a problem in Ashburnham.				1. _____
2. There are enough public beaches in town.				2. _____
3. Ashburnham needs more retail businesses.				3. _____
4. Ashburnham needs more industry.				4. _____
5. There are enough apartments in town.				5. _____
6. There is enough elderly housing in town.				6. _____
7. Ashburnham needs to have growth.				7. _____
8. There is a need for more parking space in the center of town.				8. _____
9. The town should not encourage business or industry.				9. _____
10. Ashburnham is a bedroom community.				10. _____
11. Ashburnham is a rural community.				11. _____
12. Housing development should be encouraged.				12. _____
13. The town has enough playgrounds and ballfields.				13. _____
14. Young couples and young families can afford to buy a home in town.				14. _____
15. Duplexes should be encouraged in town.				15. _____
16. There is a need for a municipal sewerage system.				16. _____
17. The town has enough nature trails and nature areas.				17. _____
18. Growth in Ashburnham is inevitable.				18. _____
19. Ashburnham should provide more types of housing than just single family homes.				19. _____
20. Ashburnham should plan for the future.				20. _____
21. There is a need for more local jobs in Ashburnham.				21. _____ Over

Statement

Agree Disagree Unsure

(Code)

22. The current rate of growth has been bad for the town.

22. _____

23. Ashburnham needs more classrooms.

23. _____

24. The extent of the town served by public water is adequate.

24. _____

Open Ended Questions

(Code)

25. Every town has certain things that give it a special character.

25A _____

What do you consider to be Ashburnham's special characteristics that make it special to you.

25B _____

25C _____

26. What do you consider to be Ashburnham's special landmarks or places that make it special to you?

26A _____

26B _____

26C _____

27. What are the biggest problems that Ashburnham must deal with in the future?

27A _____

27B _____

27C _____

28. What is the most important of those problems?

28 _____

29. How long have you lived in town?

29. _____

30. Do you live in a subdivision that was done during the last 10 years?

30. _____

If they say "yes", ask #30A. If they say "no," go on to # 31.

30A. Do you have any comments about your development?

30A. _____

31. Are you currently working outside the home?

31. _____

32. In what town do you work?

32. _____

33. Do you have children in the local public schools or children who will enter school in the next five years?

33. _____

34. What is your age?

34. _____

35. Do you have any interest in becoming involved with local town government? (If yes, how would you like to become involved?)

35. _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to help us with this survey. If you would like more information about the Master Plan, please contact the Town Hall or attend one of the regular public meetings being held concerning the project. For example, we will be presenting the results of the survey at a public hearing on Monday February 24 at 7:30 PM at Oakmont. We'd like to see you there. Do you have anything you would like to add? Thanks again. Bye.

Female 1. _____ Male 2. _____

36. _____

		TRAFFIC IS NOT A PROBLEM IN ASHBURNUM	THERE ARE ENOUGH PUBLIC BEACHES	ASHBURNUM NEEDS MORE RETAIL BUSINESS	ASHBURNUM NEEDS MORE INDUSTRY				
		:	:	:	:				
LOCATION 1	AGREE	39	20	49	51				
	DISAGREE	33	40	18	20				
	UNSURE	2	14	7	3				
		:	:	:	:				
LOCATION 2	AGREE	48	21	55	58				
	DISAGREE	39	58	31	24				
	UNSURE	5	13	6	10				
		:	:	:	:				
LOCATION 3	AGREE	33	13	47	36				
	DISAGREE	31	47	13	25				
	UNSURE	2	6	6	5				
		:	:	:	:				
NO LOCATION	AGREE	31	14	31	30				
	DISAGREE	27	40	28	31				
	UNSURE	5	9	4	2				
		:	:	:	:				
		<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>		
TOTALS	AGREE	151	51	68	23	182	62	175	59
	DISAGREE	130	44	185	63	90	31	100	34
	UNSURE	14	5	42	14	23	8	20	7

		THE TOWN SHOULD NOT ENCOURAGE BUSINESS	ASHBURNUM IS A BEDROOM COMMUNITY	ASHBURNUM IS A RURAL COMMUNITY	HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED				
LOCATION 1	AGREE	15	56	67	26				
	DISAGREE	54	10	8	40				
	UNSURE	5	8	2	8				
LOCATION 2	AGREE	15	80	71	33				
	DISAGREE	70	8	12	45				
	UNSURE	7	4	9	14				
LOCATION 3	AGREE	11	43	53	28				
	DISAGREE	50	16	7	31				
	UNSURE	5	7	6	7				
NO LOCATION	AGREE	16	42	53	19				
	DISAGREE	42	6	4	33				
	UNSURE	5	15	3	11				
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
TOTALS	AGREE	57	19	221	75	244	83	106	36
	DISAGREE	216	73	40	14	31	11	149	51
	UNSURE	22	7	34	12	20	17	40	14

		THERE IS A NEED FOR MORE LOCAL JOBS IN ASHBURNUM	THE CURRENT RATE OF GROWTH HAS BEEN BAD FOR ASHBURNUM	ASHBURNUM NEEDS MORE CLASSROOMS	THE EXTENT OF THE TOWN SERVED BY PUBLIC WATER IS ADEQUATE
	AGREE	54	24	35	39
LOCATION 1	DISAGREE	7	38	14	15
	UNSURE	13	13	25	20
	AGREE	70	37	52	39
LOCATION 2	DISAGREE	12	41	9	20
	UNSURE	9	13	31	33
	AGREE	52	23	39	20
LOCATION 3	DISAGREE	6	32	7	17
	UNSURE	8	11	20	29
	AGREE	41	31	44	20
NO LOCATION	DISAGREE	12	23	9	15
	UNSURE	11	9	10	28
		# %	# %	# %	# %
	AGREE	217 74	115 39	170 58	118 40
TOTALS	DISAGREE	37 13	134 45	39 13	67 23
	UNSURE	41 14	46 16	86 29	110 37
		295	295	295	295

		THERE ARE ENOUGH APARTMENTS IN ASHBURNUM	THERE IS ENOUGH ELD. HOUSING IN ASHBURNUM	ASHBURNUM NEEDS TO HAVE GROWTH	THERE IS A NEED FOR MORE PARKING				
LOCATION 1	AGREE	15	9	48	44				
	DISAGREE	37	43	22	23				
	UNSURE	22	22	3	7				
LOCATION 2	AGREE	15	10	43	56				
	DISAGREE	56	58	37	29				
	UNSURE	21	24	12	7				
LOCATION 3	AGREE	14	3	41	45				
	DISAGREE	38	47	21	20				
	UNSURE	14	16	4	1				
NO LOCATION	AGREE	11	5	35	45				
	DISAGREE	38	45	25	17				
	UNSURE	14	13	4	1				
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
TOTALS	AGREE	55	19	27	9	167	57	190	64
	DISAGREE	169	57	193	65	105	34	89	30
	UNSURE	71	24	75	25	23	8	16	5

		ASHBURNUM HAS ENOUGH TRAILS AND NATURE AREAS	GROWTH IN ASHBURNUM IS INEVITABLE	ASHBURNUM SHOULD PLAN FOR MORE THAN SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING	ASHBURNUM SHOULD PLAN FOR THE FUTURE
		:	:	:	:
LOCATION 1	AGREE	29	69	39	72
	DISAGREE	28	6	31	1
	UNSURE	18	0	5	2
		:	:	:	:
LOCATION 2	AGREE	35	80	51	88
	DISAGREE	36	7	28	2
	UNSURE	20	4	12	1
		:	:	:	:
LOCATION 3	AGREE	21	58	36	63
	DISAGREE	26	4	18	2
	UNSURE	19	4	12	1
		:	:	:	:
NO LOCATION	AGREE	24	51	34	61
	DISAGREE	19	8	21	2
	UNSURE	20	4	8	0
		:	:	:	:
		# %	# %	# %	# %
TOTALS	AGREE	109 37	258 87	160 54	284 96
	DISAGREE	109 37	25 8	98 33	7 2
	UNSURE	77 26	12 4	37 13	4 1
		295	295	295	295

		ASHBURNUM HAS ENOUGH PLAYGROUNDS	YOUNG FAMILIES CAN AFFORD TO BUY A HOME IN TOWN	DUPLEXES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED IN TOWN	THERE IS A NEED FOR A MUNICIPAL SEWER SYSTEM	
LOCATION 1	AGREE	29	27	27	44	
	DISAGREE	23	32	36	16	
	UNSURE	22	15	11	16	
LOCATION 2	AGREE	36	26	35	66	
	DISAGREE	37	50	38	16	
	UNSURE	19	16	18	9	
LOCATION 3	AGREE	23	27	31	49	
	DISAGREE	30	28	21	8	
	UNSURE	13	11	14	9	
NO LOCATION	AGREE	27	14	23	46	
	DISAGREE	27	41	33	10	
	UNSURE	9	8	8	6	
TOTALS	AGREE	115	94	116	205	69
	DISAGREE	117	151	128	50	17
	UNSURE	63	50	51	40	14
		295	295	295	295	

MODEL WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION DISTRICT BYLAW

Proposed Water Supply Protection District

Section 2C . Water Supply Protection District

A. General

This district is an overlay district and shall be superimposed on the other districts or portions thereof established by this bylaw. The rules for this superimposed district shall be in addition to, rather than in place of, the rules for such other districts. The boundaries of the district shall be as shown in the Zoning Map of the Town of Ashburnham.

B. Purpose

The purpose of the Water Supply Protection District is to promote the health, safety and welfare of the community by:

1. protecting, preserving and maintaining the surface water resources within the town.
2. protecting the community from any use of land and buildings which may pollute or otherwise adversely affect its water resources.

C. Permitted Uses

Any use permitted in the underlying zone (Residential B and Wetlands and Watershed Districts) shall be permitted, as modified by Section 2.C.D.

D. Prohibited Uses

The following uses are prohibited as principal or accessory uses in the Water Supply Protection District.

1. The manufacture, processing, storage or disposal of hazardous materials, as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality Engineering regulations promulgated under the Hazardous Waste Management Act, (M.G.L., Chapter 21C.)
2. Solid waste landfills, junkyards and dumps, with the exception of the disposal of brush or stumps.
3. Outdoor storage of salt or snow melting chemicals.
4. The dumping of snow contaminated by deicing chemicals.
5. The use of septic system cleaners which contain toxic chemicals.
6. The storage of herbicides or pesticides, other than the amounts associated with normal household or agricultural use.

E. Restricted Uses

1. The use of sodium chloride for ice control shall be minimized, consistent with public highway safety requirements.
2. The application of herbicides, pesticides or fertilizers, other than amounts associated with normal household or agricultural use, shall require the written permission from the Board of Health. All necessary precautions shall be taken to prevent hazardous concentrations of herbicides or pesticides in the water as a result of such application.

MODEL GARDEN HOUSING DISTRICT BYLAW

4. Garden Housing District Regulations - The following amendment should be entered in the bylaw as Section 2B.

Section 2B. GARDEN HOUSING (GH) DISTRICT REGULATIONS

A. Intent. - A Garden Housing District shall be used exclusively for the erection and maintenance of garden housing projects to the end that pleasant, open, safe, healthy and presentable residential projects of moderate height, attractive landscaping and greater density than that allowed in other districts may be available for residential use in the Town of Ashburnham.

A "development area" in the Garden Housing District shall mean any lot of land of at least five (5) acres in size under one ownership. Projects involving other than single and two family houses must occur within a development area.

B. Permitted Uses.

1. Single family houses
2. Two family houses
3. Buildings with 1 to 4 units of attached housing.

C. Permitted Accessory Uses. - Accessory buildings, garages, and maintenance buildings, swimming pools, community buildings, tennis courts and all accessory uses allowed in a Residential A or A-1 District.

D. Special Permit Uses. - Rest Homes, convalescent and nursing homes, nursery schools and day care centers.

E. Area and Density Regulations.

1. Lot coverage. - The total area enclosed by the outside perimeters of the foundation walls of all buildings erected or attached on a lot shall not cover more than thirty (30) percent of the total development area in which they are located excluding from such total area, the total area of all streets and drives furnishing access to any building and the total area of all parking areas located in each development area.

2. Lot Area. - The gross lot size of the development area shall be related to the presence of municipal sewer service and the number of bedrooms per dwelling unit.

a. If municipal sewerage serves the project, then the gross lot size shall not be less than:

1. 10,000 square feet of land per dwelling unit for each unit with three or more bedrooms.

ii. 9000 square feet of land per dwelling unit for each one or two bedroom unit.

b. If municipal sewerage service is not available, then an on-site, consolidated septic system shall be used to serve the entire development area if other than single family and two family houses are constructed. If said approach is used, then the gross lot size shall not be less than:

i. 30,000 square feet of land per dwelling unit for each unit with three or more bedrooms.

ii. 25,000 square feet of land per dwelling unit for each two bedroom unit.

iii. 20,000 square feet of land per dwelling unit for each one bedroom or efficiency unit.

c. In no case shall a development area in this district be less than five (5) acres.

d. There shall be at least one area of open space large enough and centrally located so as to constitute a usable recreation area for the inhabitants of the complex. The main recreation area shall have at least twenty thousand (20,000) square feet. Ownership and maintenance of open space shall follow the requirements described in "Cluster Development", Section 5.5.

F. Height.

1. Residential Buildings in a development area shall not exceed two stories or thirty (30) feet in height. Basement housing is not permitted.

2. Accessory buildings shall not exceed one story or fifteen (15) feet in height.

G. Setback and Distance between Buildings.

1. Buildings to lot and street lines:

a. No portion of any building shall be closer than fifty (50) feet from any perimeter lot line or twenty (20) feet from any driveway or parking lot.

b. No portion of any building shall be closer than seventy-five (75) feet from an exterior streetline or from a building line adjacent to the exterior street line of a street designed to serve the development.

c. Generally no real wall of any building shall be more than three hundred fifty (350) feet from any street or driveway shown on a plan approved by the Planning Board.

2. Buildings to Buildings:

All residential buildings shall be at least forty (40) feet from each other EXCEPT that in no case shall two windowed walls facing one another be closer than sixty (60) feet.

3. Screening and Landscaping:

a. Perimeter. When a building is one hundred (100) feet or less from any lot line, natural screening consisting of coniferous trees of a height no less than five (5) feet shall be planted where no comparable screening exists originally.

b. Common Areas. All common areas not containing parking areas, walkways, recreational uses or accessory structures shall be planted and maintained with grass and shrubs. In addition to the perimeter planting requirements, at least one shade tree per 5 dwelling units shall be maintained if existing or planted and maintained strategically with the complex of buildings such that their natural benefits can be shared by the occupants.

H. Parking.

1. Amount. Off-street parking shall be provided at the rate of at least two and one half (2.5) parking spaces for each dwelling unit.

2. Location.

a. Not less than forty (40) feet from any external street.

b. Not less than twenty (20) feet from any building unless in conjunction with a garage or carport.

c. No parking is permitted on any internal streets or drives.

d. See Section 5.3 for additional requirements.

I. Access.

1. All street or drives furnishing access to any dwelling unit in this District shall be provided in accordance with the applicable Subdivision Regulations of the Town.

2. The Planning Board shall determine what is adequate access to each building. This includes the construction characteristics of the ways. In no case shall the drive be less than twenty (20) feet in paved width. Principal criteria to be considered in this site plan review are:

a. The distance from each building to the nearest way providing access.,

b. The number of dwelling units or parking spaces to be served by the way.

c. Accessibility to fire and other emergency or service vehicles.

I. Signs. - See Section 5.2.

J. Special Regulations.

1. The applicant shall submit to the Planning Board a site plan as required in Section 5.10 .

2. The site plan as approved by the Planning Board shall be filed with the Building Inspector and any major changes as determined by the Building Inspector in the approved plans must be re-submitted to the Planning Board.

TABLE A
REQUIRED LANDSCAPING

REQUIREMENT BY LOT AREA	PERCENT OF TOTAL AUTOMOBILE PARKING AND CIRCULATION AREA TO BE LANDSCAPED	DEPTH OF BUFFER ALONG STREET LINES	WIDTH OF BUFFER FOR ABUTTING RESIDENTIAL USES AND/OR DISTRICTS
UP TO AND INCLUDING 15,000 SQ. FT.	NO REQUIREMENTS	5 FEET	5 FEET
15,001 TO 30,000 SQ. FT.	4 PERCENT	5 FEET	5 FEET
30,001 TO 43,560 SQ. FT.	5 PERCENT	10 FEET FRONT YARD STREET LINE. 5 FEET ALL OTHER STREET LINES.	10 FEET
43,561 TO 100,000 SQ. FT.	6 PERCENT	10 FEET FRONT YARD STREET LINE. 5 FEET ALL OTHER STREET LINES.	10 FEET
100,001 SQ. FT. UP TO BUT NOT INCLUDING 217,800 SQ. FT. (5 ACRES)	7 PERCENT	15 FEET FRONT YARD STREET LINE. 7 FEET ALL OTHER STREET LINES.	15 FEET
5 ACRES OR MORE	8 PERCENT	25 FEET FRONT YARD STREET LINE. 20 FEET ALL OTHER STREET LINES.	20 FEET

BUILDOUT AND FISCAL IMPACT DATA

Buildout Analysis

An estimate was done of the number of lots with frontage on town roads that could still be built on. A total of 43 miles of undeveloped frontage was identified that was not constrained by over a 15% slope or wetlands. This is a conservative estimate since housing construction can often occur on slopes greater than 15%.

The 43 miles translates into 227,040 feet. Assuming a 200 foot frontage, that means there are 1135 available lots. Using a larger frontage figure of 250 feet results in a 908 total buildout capacity. Using population per household averages (included in this appendix), the projected population from 908 new 3 bedroom single family homes would be 3037 total persons. Of those, 720 would be school age children.

The average number of building permits issued for single and two family houses for the last 5 years was 43.3 per year. Assuming 908 buildable lots and 30 new houses per year, the town would reach roadside buildout in 30 years. If the average is increased to 40 units per year, then the buildout would be reached in 23 years.

This information is presented to give an example of how understanding the amount of land yet to be built on can be used to create projections of future development impacts. The information discussed above indicates that in the next 20 to 40 years, the town's population could increase by 70% without one subdivision being built. A method to demonstrate the fiscal impact of such residential development is presented below.

Fiscal Impact Calculation

The following calculation is based on an average single family house in Ashburnham. It has 3 bedrooms and costs \$90,000. This analysis presents the revenue expected from that property, the cost to the town of educating the one or two children that might live in that house and the cost to the town of servicing an additional home (average fire, police and administrative costs). This is an estimate, but it demonstrates the general fiscal impact of an average home.

Revenue

Property Value = \$90,000

Tax Rate = \$19.89/\$1000

Revenue Received = \$1790

School Cost

Total Ashburnham School Expenditures (from FY 85/86 budget)

Briggs	943,457
Oakmont	638,183
Trade	45,182
Chapter 2	4,083
Lunch Program	520

Total Cost \$1,631,425

State School Aid Received

Chapter 70	\$496,137
Board of Education	100,157

Total State Aid \$605,294

State Aid as Percent of Total School Cost

$\$605,294 / \$1,631,425 = 37\%$

Total Cost per Student (as reported by superintendent's office) =
\$2785

State Aid Received per Student = $\$2785 \times 37\% = \1030

Actual Cost to Town per Student = $\$2785 - 1030 = \1755

Non-School Cost

Residential Property as Percent of Total Property in Town = 94%

Total Tax Revenues from Residential Properties = \$1,861,435
(Tax revenues can also be seen as the amount of money
that the town has to use to support operations, such as
schools. Therefore in this case, tax revenue equals tax
supported cost.)

Total Town Supported School Cost Attributable to Residential Tax
Support

= (School Budget - State Aid) x 94%

= $(\$1,631,425 - 605,294) \times 94\% = \$1,026,131 \times 94\%$

= \$964,563

Total Non-School Cost Attributable to Residential Properties

Total Tax Supported Cost - School Cost

= $\$1,861,435 - 964,563 = \$896,872$

Average non-school cost per housing unit

Number of units in town = 2000 (1980 Census figure updated)

Non-school cost per unit = \$448

Net Impact to Town of One New Single Family House

	<u>2 Children</u>	<u>1 Child</u>	<u>0.79 Child*</u>	<u>0 Children</u>
Revenue	\$1790	\$1790	\$1790	
\$1790				
- School Cost	\$3510	\$1755	\$1386	
0				

- Non-school cost	\$ 448	\$ 448	\$ 448	\$
448				

Net Impact	- \$2168	- \$ 413	- \$ 44	+
\$1342				

* This 0.79 figure is the average number of children that would be projected in a 3 bedroom house in New England. See attached standards.

Summary

The above calculations clearly indicate that just allowing residential development can be a costly direction for a town to head. The data also indicate that alternative forms of housing that attract persons without children (i.e. empty-nester condominiums), can be financially important to a town that has relatively little commercial or industrial base.

The analysis given here is an averaged estimate. This same process can be used to evaluate the specific impact of a proposed development. For more detailed information on fiscal impact analysis, refer to The New Fiscal Impact Handbook by Burchell and Listokin, 1985 (publisher: Rutgers, N.J./Center for Urban Policy Research).

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC MULTIPLIERS FOR COMMON CONFIGURATIONS OF STANDARD HOUSING TYPES FOR TOTAL HOUSEHOLD SIZE

—BY HOUSING TYPE AND NUMBER OF BEDROOMS—
[For housing built during 1975-1980 and monitored in 1980]

REGION	HIGH RISE			MOBILE HOMES			DUPLEX, TRIPLEX, QUADPLEX					
	Studio	1 BR	2 BR	Blended (All BRs)	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	Blended (All BRs)	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	Blended (All BRs)
NORTHEAST	1.055	1.257	2.072	1.405	1.689	2.193	3.528	2.667	1.492	2.322	3.429	2.527
New England	1.067	1.221	1.956	1.376	1.560	2.127	3.444	2.505	1.398	2.326	3.430	2.350
Middle Atlantic	1.054	1.272	2.129	1.417	1.761	2.217	3.551	2.724	1.556	2.320	3.429	2.619
NORTH CENTRAL	1.034	1.135	1.799	1.258	1.795	2.231	3.393	2.684	1.395	2.134	3.099	2.259
East North Central	1.050	1.126	1.842	1.270	1.750	2.229	3.441	2.658	1.473	2.127	3.093	2.275
West North Central	1.000	1.165	1.600	1.217	1.873	2.235	3.332	2.726	1.305	2.146	3.110	2.233
SOUTH	1.103	1.274	1.917	1.516	2.061	2.391	3.572	2.849	1.695	2.281	3.237	2.472
South Atlantic	1.120	1.330	1.914	1.580	2.027	2.300	3.536	2.759	1.714	2.237	3.228	2.434
East South Central	1.095	1.090	1.800	1.175	2.165	2.544	3.574	2.958	1.504	2.315	3.255	2.502
West South Central	1.000	1.057	2.286	1.200	2.058	2.443	3.623	2.918	1.712	2.342	3.238	2.516
WEST	1.343	1.528	2.218	1.770	1.912	2.371	3.382	2.574	1.927	2.313	3.093	2.513
Mountain	1.000	1.162	1.611	1.253	2.048	2.312	3.495	2.803	1.723	2.360	3.040	2.533
Pacific	1.348	1.607	2.279	1.848	1.825	2.057	3.259	2.408	2.013	2.292	3.114	2.504
NATIONAL (All Region Average)	1.128	1.260	1.989	1.457	1.946	2.286	3.409	2.714	1.643	2.257	3.187	2.419

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population and Housing (Public Use Sample), 1980.

[illegible]

EXHIBIT 13

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC MULTIPLIERS FOR COMMON
CONFIGURATIONS OF STANDARD HOUSING TYPES FOR
SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

—BY HOUSING TYPE AND NUMBER OF BEDROOMS—
[For housing built during 1975-1980 and monitored in 1980]

REGION	SINGLE FAMILY					GARDEN APARTMENTS				TOWNHOUSE			
	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR	5 BR	Blended (All BRs)	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	Blended (All BRs)	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	Blended (All BRs)
NORTHEAST	.199	.734	1.366	1.955	.845	.017	.231	.857	.175	.038	.164	.550	.377
New England	.243	.793	1.470	2.052	.840	.007	.203	.883	.155	.053	.147	.676	.348
Middle Atlantic	.166	.705	1.328	1.921	.847	.023	.248	.847	.186	.033	.168	.532	.383
NORTH CENTRAL	.236	.773	1.458	2.191	.897	.014	.157	.757	.138	.087	.154	.521	.355
East North Central	.233	.772	1.455	2.139	.905	.018	.164	.796	.142	.098	.164	.513	.363
West North Central	.238	.773	1.463	2.256	.882	.006	.141	.680	.128	.068	.135	.542	.340
SOUTH	.276	.741	1.371	1.903	.813	.044	.225	.911	.267	.137	.197	.519	.402
South Atlantic	.332	.718	1.324	1.885	.782	.049	.190	.864	.263	.179	.194	.496	.411
East South Central	.321	.775	1.407	1.810	.845	.045	.247	.974	.290	.066	.200	.619	.384
West South Central	.329	.749	1.416	2.044	.835	.039	.269	.961	.259	.100	.203	.616	.375
WEST	.267	.685	1.293	1.996	.825	.054	.235	.686	.226	.159	.158	.475	.328
Mountain	.236	.690	1.398	2.207	.849	.035	.215	.667	.195	.101	.137	.410	.303
Pacific	.289	.683	1.241	1.837	.812	.060	.241	.693	.237	.173	.166	.493	.336
NATIONAL	.256	.737	1.371	2.007	.839	.034	.209	.818	.212	.121	.170	.512	.367
(All Region Average)													

REGION	HIGH RISE			MOBILE HOMES			DUPLEX, TRIPLEX, QUADPLEX		
	Studio	1 BR	2 BR	Blended (All BRs)	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	Blended (All BRs)	Blended (All BRs)
NORTHEAST	.000	.004	.148	.035	.053	.182	.986	.483	.423
New England	.000	.003	.066	.022	.000	.167	.917	.398	.356
Middle Atlantic	.000	.004	.188	.041	.082	.188	1.005	.513	.458
NORTH CENTRAL	.000	.000	.047	.011	.105	.193	.891	.475	.310
East North Central	.000	.000	.058	.013	.096	.192	.961	.476	.317
West North Central	.000	.000	.000	.004	.120	.194	.802	.474	.299
SOUTH	.000	.013	.073	.041	.196	.249	.994	.551	.419
South Atlantic	.000	.017	.073	.046	.191	.211	.986	.512	.396
East South Central	.000	.000	.100	.021	.251	.312	.976	.589	.440
West South Central	.000	.000	.000	.000	.176	.271	1.016	.586	.444
WEST	.086	.052	.228	.132	.131	.166	.841	.416	.397
Mountain	.000	.015	.000	.011	.159	.227	.881	.512	.364
Pacific	.087	.061	.251	.150	.113	.131	.798	.347	.412
NATIONAL	.017	.011	.114	.045	.150	.213	.937	.497	.387
(All Region Average)									

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population and Housing (Public Use Sample), 1980.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT STATEMENT

Development Impact Statement (Non-Residential)

A Development Impact Statement (DIS) is a documented, written analysis of a proposed development which provides the Planning Board and town officials with information necessary for plan review.

It is a developer's responsibility to prepare and document the DIS in sufficient detail to permit an adequate evaluation by the Planning Board; however, additional data may be requested in writing by the Board. It is necessary to respond to all sections of the DIS form except when a written exemption is granted by the Planning Board. The applicant is urged to stay in contact with the Planning Board during the process of completing a DIS.

NAME OF PROJECT:

ACREAGE:

TYPE OF PROJECT:

OWNER:

LOCATION:

ENGINEER:

PARCEL NUMBER(S):

ARCHITECT:

ZONING DISTRICT(S):

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- a. Type of business - Give description of products to be manufactured
or services to be provided. What processes will be involved in
production or service provision? Will hazardous materials
of any
kind be used in those processes?
- b. Type of building proposed (Describe general construction
materials
and type of architecture.)
- c. Square footage of proposed building:
- d. Projected lot coverage (%):
- e. Number of projected employees (Total and per shift):
- f. Hours of operation:

II. CIRCULATION SYSTEMS

- a. Percentage of lot to be used for streets and driveways:
- b. Percentage of lot to be used for parking:
- c. Percentage of lot to be used for pedestrian systems:
- d. Number of parking spaces planned:
- e. Number of truck deliveries per day to project:
- f. Number of cars entering project per day:
- g. Will car and/or truck repair facilities be on-site?
- h. Discuss the orientation and rationale of the pedestrian system.
- i. Will bus stops be provided? If so, location, shelter design,
and orientation to path systems.

III. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

a. Water Distribution:

1. Public - Discuss the project's water distribution system, including projected demand, ability to serve all aspects of the development, use of water for air conditioning, fire protection, and any special problems such as check valves or booster pumps which must be dealt with.

2. Private - Discuss the types of well proposed for the project, means for providing fire supply, and any special problems which might arise.

b. Sewage Disposal

1. Public - Discuss the project's sewage disposal system, including projected flow, size of pumping stations, and any special problems such as lift stations or check valves which must be dealt with.

2. Private - Discuss the type of system, level of treatment, suitability of soils and results of percolation tests.

c. Storm Drainage - Discuss the storm drainage system including the projected flow from a 50 year storm, name of the receptor stream, and any flow constrictions between the site and the receptor stream.

d. Refuse Disposal - Discuss the location and type of facilities, hazardous materials requiring special precautions and screening.

e. Lighting - Discuss the location and size of lights and methods used to screen adjoining properties from glare.

f. Fire Protection - Discuss the type and capacity of fuel storage facilities, location of storage areas for hazardous substances, special requirements and distance to fire station.

g. Recreation - Discuss any recreation facilities that will be provided on the site.

IV. NATURAL CONDITIONS

Describe briefly the following natural conditions:

a. Topography - Indicate datum, source, date, slopes greater than 15%.

b. Soils - Indicate prime agricultural land, depth to bedrock, extent of land which has been filled.

c. Mineral Resources - Indicate extent and economic importance of resource, extent and means of proposed extraction, rehabilitation measures.

d. Depth of water table

e. Aquifer recharge areas

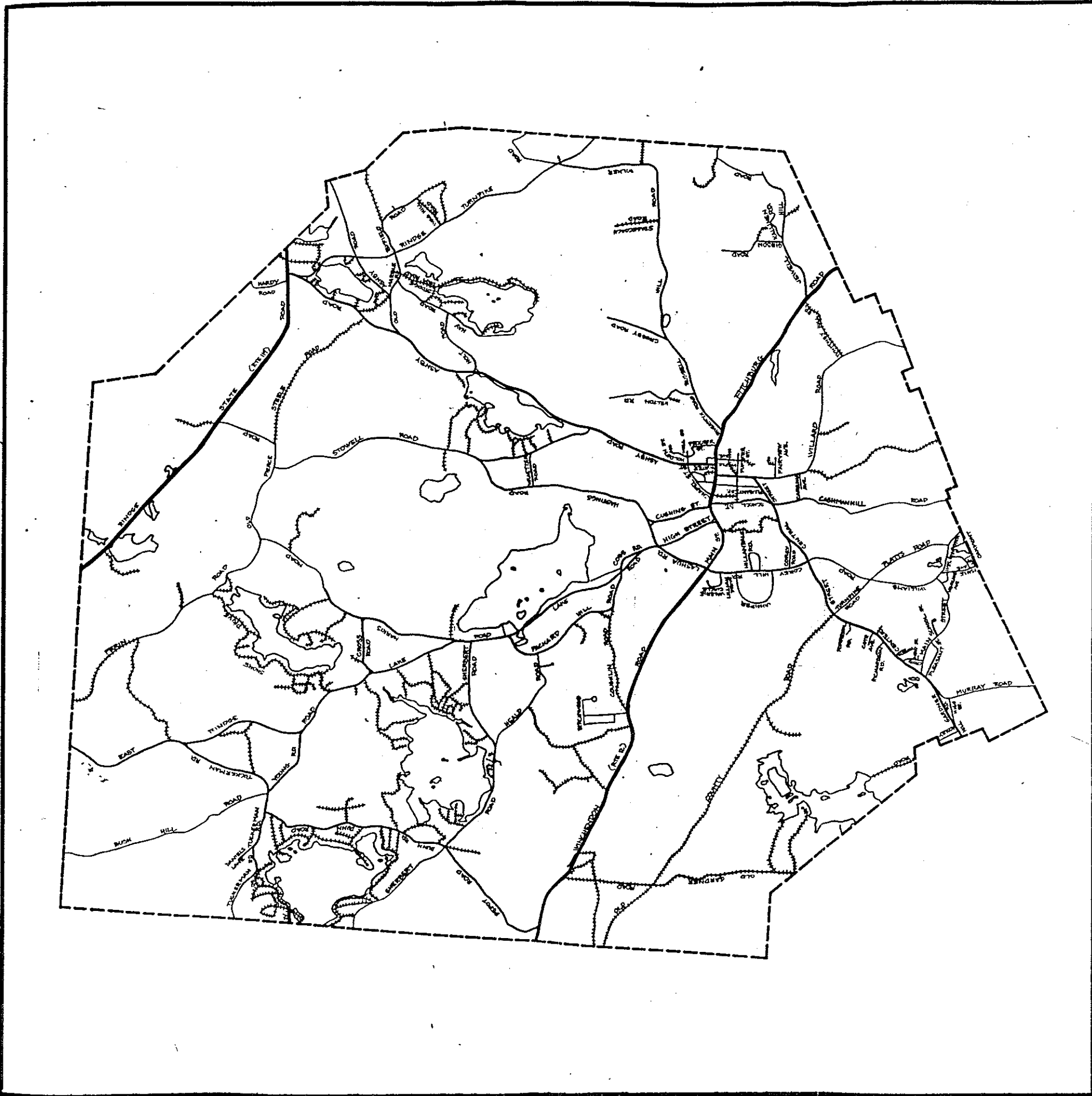
f. Wetlands

- g. Watercourses
- h. Flood prone areas
- i. Vegetative cover
- j. Unique wildlife habitats
- k. Unique vegetation

V. DESIGN FACTORS

Describe briefly the following features. Photographs are helpful.

- a. Present visual quality of the area.
- b. Location of significant viewpoints.
- c. Historic structures.



**MASTER PLAN
ASHBURNHAM, MA
LANDUSE, INCORPORATED**

ROAD STATUS MAP

1000 2000 4000 6000

FALL 1985

LEGEND

- ROADS ACCEPTED BY TOWN
- ROADS NOT ACCEPTED
- STATE ROADS